IN BLUE & UNIFORM

AN ARMY NOVEL



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In Blue Uniform

AN ARMY NOVEL

BY

GEORGE I. PUTNAM

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1893

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DEDICATION

My dear Melville Upton: —

In offering you this book I come not as one exalting his gifts, but rather as one making sincere acknowledgment of service done. While the work involved has all been mine, it was yours to perform that primary and necessary office best described as "touching the button." For without the energetic impulse imparted by your vigorous nature, the book had never been written. Some who will read the book may regard your act with distrust; I can at least assure them that your motive was good. But whether you have done well or ill it shall be far from me to declare. I can do no more than affirm the pleasure it gives me to thus make you, in a way, joint-heir with me in the mingled favor and disfavor that the book will surely find.

GEORGE I. PUTNAM.

Charlestown, New Hampshire,
April 5, 1893.

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IN BLUE UNIFORM

STATEMENT

THIS is a story of the Old Regiment. Every man and woman will know which that is; and yet no two will be likely to agree. For though there have been and still are regiments upon regiments, but one holds to each of us the proud pre-eminence of being the Old Regiment. That is its title of flattering distinction, its mark of affectionate regard. For official purposes, let it be designated by a number, something between one and twenty-five, — for this shall be an infantry regiment, most of us being foot-soldiers, — but the number never will get beyond officedom. Let two crutch-supported veterans of a younger day meet and compare notes. "What was your regiment?" says one. "After I was promoted to Major I served with the so-and-so; but my fighting days were spent

in the Old Regiment." That is his sufficient claim to distinction and preferment.

In the time of which I write the Old Regiment was furbishing up its battered accoutrements after one campaign, and getting itself in handsome trim for another. This was an occupation that palled upon it after a little, for it smacked of the smug safety of civil life. Its forte lay in the field. It had a way of going forth with more cartridges and men than another regiment, and of coming back with fewer. That was why all the young men with a life apiece to throw away quickly, made haste to enlist with the Old Regiment. But now its chief end seemed to be to draw an oiled rag through a shiny gun-barrel — an occupation for old soldiers with a satiated taste for fighting. And garrison days were unconscionably long in coming to an end.

The headquarters were at a post on a west Texas prairie. Here were six companies out of the ten, and a troop of cavalry. Brave, decrepit old Colonel Randelmann was in command, with portly, empurpled Major Remmick second. It was isolated, as army posts usually were; but the army being at all time sufficient unto itself, the Old Regi-

ment did not care. It was a good station, as stations went, and assignment to it was regarded as a mark of favor. The Old Regiment always made the best of everything, and accordingly appreciated its temporary home.

A long, low row of dingy brown cottages made up the officers' quarters, and were known collectively as the "Line." One could stand at either end on a day when the piazzas were occupied, and have a clear view of each cottage and family to the other. The builders had used a rough native stone, and chinked it with native mud. From the majority of chinks the mud had fallen; so that each dust-storm was necessarily followed by a fierce day of house-cleaning. These openings also gave free entrance to the native vermin of the land — to centipedes, scorpions, and tarantulas; but the Old Regiment was accustomed to more dangerous and insidious foes, and sat undisturbed. The Line extended the length of the parade, and was faced on the opposite side by the men's barracks, also of stone, with long porches. The men sat there of an evening, and their pipes glowed through the dusk. And in hot weather they

swung hammocks from the porch roof, and slept there through the night. Behind the barracks was yet another row of weather-worn cottages, occupied by married soldiers. Their wives were generally laundresses, except in the cases of exalted non-commissioned officers, and gave to this section of the settlement the name of "Calico Row." Beyond, there were the adobe walls of the corrals, with the stables, the hay- and wood-yards, and the world over which the quartermaster held sway. Quite independent was the Old Regiment in its girt-about station.

It was an admirable parade ground on which the quarters looked; as level as a floor and liable in wet seasons to be transformed into a shallow, wadable lake, to the great delight of the children. The water disappeared quickly, and the grass came up short and thick, and of a delicate green, as became its quick growth. It would be dotted with prairie flowers of various tints, blooming but for a day, and without fragrance. As the hot sun scorched the grass, and the feet of tramping men thinned it, multitudes of circular holes the size of a lead-pencil appeared in the soil. These were the entrances to the

chambers of tarantulas, and endless fun did the garrison children have around and about them.

From the centre of the parade rose the tall, tapering flagstaff, wavering from the plumb, and leaning heavily on its many props like an old soldier on his crutches. It had seen its best days, and was an object of solicitude. Near it was a square upraise of stone, on which the sundial was placed. Regularly, with the anticipated arrival from West Point of a newly fledged Second Lieutenant, the old sundial was destroyed; and the first duty required of him was to build another.

"A sundial!" he exclaimed in dismay, vaguely remembering that some mention of such a thing had been made at the Academy. "What on earth is wanted of a sundial?"

"To tell the time with," was the curt reply.

"But what's the matter with your clocks?"

"Such a misfortune! They are all unreliable, and the best have been allowed to run down. We have no way of telling the correct time; we are living by guess. You are just the man for us — fresh from the Academy; you will know exactly how to build a sundial, and set us on our feet again!"

Two antique pieces of field artillery stood in front of the headquarters building, and an ordnance sergeant was maintained to care for them. The morning and evening guns were his particular function. With infinite care, lest there should be a grain too much for the old guns, he would weigh out the powder charge, tie it methodically in the cartridge-bag, ram it down the throat of the gun with a stated number of motions, prick it twice — never more or less — insert the friction primer and jerk the lanyard, while the gun roared through all the length and breadth of the post, and the flag fluttered up or down its staff. He was a creature of mechanical methods, was the ordnance sergeant, and had more spare time than any other man. Yet he always maintained a pleasing fiction of being busy on official matters, insomuch that his large, perspiring wife, who had charge of the bachelor officers' mess, could never count upon him for the least assistance. She believed implicitly in his labors, and was often indignant at a government that required such steady application from its soldiers and paid them so poorly for it; and she took into her service one Mezique, a comely negro ex-trooper, a

"left-over" from the last garrison. For some reason, probably no more distant than the sutler's bar-room, he had not been re-enlisted. So he remained behind when the colored cavalry rode away, and snapped his fingers at destiny. He was a hunter, knew every wild-turkey roost in the region, and brought many a fine bird to the bachelors' table. His sole remaining purpose in life seemed to be the raising of pointer puppies, which he presented feelingly to officers yet unwary — and later borrowed from them in sums of five dollars each. Thus did he manage to exist with a maximum of comfort, and to know more days of leisure than of labor.

The sheep and goats were divided as by a great gulf along the length of the parade. One side was to the commissioned strength, the other to the enlisted. Across this gulf only the strictest official intercourse was sanctioned. Unbending orders were given to the offspring of either side; and it was only when the officers' children were unusually wicked, or the soldiers' children unusually daring, that they came together on childhood's terms of democratic equality. Even the dogs of the two halves recognized the distinction, and

bore each other an implacable hatred. Let an officer's dog encroach the least trifle on the thither side of the parade, and barracks resounded with the war-cries of soldiers' dogs rushing upon him. Then the invader turned tail and incontinently fled to his own domain, unless supports were at hand, when a battle royal would ensue. And similarly, no barrack dog ever prowled bone-seeking about the officers' kitchens. Each set had its own hunting-ground, and kept jealously to it.

Despite its inaction, the Old Regiment was happy. It was in a land of delights for the hearty and open-handed. Fine fishing and hunting abounded without the limits of the post. The shot-gun was busy near at hand, and farther away, in sundry cañons and along strange water-courses, the rifle brought down large game. There were houses to live in, and families were brought out from the states and installed in them. The blue of sky overhung the green of earth, with the gay banner of the army's love flying mid-between. The bugle called to duty, not danger. Life became placid. A chief excitement lay in visits to a little town that had sprung up under the protecting presence of the post,

but even that was tame. The life of the army lay within itself, and every going beyond the garrison gates was a trip into a foreign country. The birds flew unceasingly in circles above, and the water of the creek rippled forever past; but the Old Regiment sat in its station, resting. It had its seasons and its changes, and now had come the day of retrospective quiet.

I

THE set of quarters occupied by Major Remmick was half-way down the Line, and dominated the others by a full half-story. For this was a two-story house; the others, even that of Colonel Bruff, the new commanding officer, boasted but a story and a half. The Major and Mrs. Remmick were the least bit in the world proud and satisfied that they had been able to retain this set through the changes consequent upon the retirement for disability of old Colonel Randelmann and the coming of the new Colonel to his kingdom.

Colonel Randelmann had been a bachelor, a man from the volunteers, and one of the simplest minded, most honorable men that came acceptably through the fierce winnowing of the Civil War. He was one of those few whom the curt record of the annual Army Register shows to have enlisted in '61 as a private, and to have graduated in '65 as a

brigadier- or major-general of volunteers. But from having been an insatiable fighting man in his youth, in his age he had contracted an intolerable habit of campaigning to whoso might be found to listen. The daily duty in consequence of which he swung his stiff wooden peg over the parade ground, from his quarters to the office and back, was scrupulously performed; but the trip had acquired for him the perils of a flank movement in the face of the enemy. He prosed of past deeds, and not infrequently forgot his inability to do others like them. In despite of this forgetfulness, or perhaps in consequence of it, he was shelved upon the retired list. It nearly broke the old soldier's heart. The years of his service seemed very few and incomplete as viewed from the large end. But if he sorrowed, the regiment rejoiced with a chastened joy. Colonel Randelmann was well liked, and the regiment had been proud to be commanded by a man with so excellent a record. But his departure meant the coming of a younger man, with probably increased activity in service for all. So Colonel Randelmann vacated his end set of quarters, and was escorted from the garrison to the mellow

notes of trumpets that were quite as ready to send forth triumphant blasts upon the first sight in the distance of his successor. Colonel Randelmann had been in the army years enough to know this was the inevitable; he accepted it with bowed head, and went his way.

"Now," said Mrs. Remmick to the Major, "we might just as well make up our minds to being ranked out of quarters. This is the best set in the post, and it isn't likely that Mrs. Bruff will be satisfied with anything short of that."

"I suppose not," said the Major, with regret.

"Then, of course, it will shift along down through all the officers. Every one will have to move."

"Got your eye on the set you'll take, eh?" inquired the Major.

"We shall certainly follow the example of our seniors, and take the best we can get, Major; and that will be Captain Eagan's."

"That's right. Everybody will drop a notch, and the *n*th man will choose between a tent and a garret," remarked the Major, with pleasant forethought. He was a true disciple of the principle of army etiquette, by

which every newcomer at a post may seize upon the quarters of any officer below him in rank, and cause an upheaval all through the lower part of the Line. "Eagan will rank out Barrett, and he the next, and so down to Lyndon; and then the lieutenants will take a shuffle."

A knock was at the door. "Hello!" shouted the Major. "Come in!" Captain Lyndon entered.

"Good evening, Captain," said the Major and Mrs. Remmick in concert. He was well liked by both. Mrs. Remmick, with busy hospitality, insisted upon the most comfortable chair for the caller, and trundled it forth for him. He accepted it with the slight embarrassment that might be looked for in a man accustomed to sit on cracker-boxes with a luxurious sense of satisfaction. Major Remmick laughed in good-natured commentary upon his wife's endeavors.

"I've seen the time when the ground was good enough for Lyndon," said he. Lyndon laughed with him at the memory of old campaigning days.

"Yes, and you too," said he.

"It isn't good enough now for either of

you," Mrs. Remmick declared. "You are in garrison, where it's your business to be comfortable in a civilized way. You are not hunting Indians — or being hunted by them." She concluded with a pleased expression that indicated her joy in all her surroundings.

"And yet we may be on the hunt to-morrow — for quarters," said the Major, unable to get away from the train of thought started by his wife.

"That's so," ejaculated Lyndon, as though suddenly recalling a fact. "The new C. O. is due then, isn't he, with bag and baggage, wife and maid? Where do you expect the lightning to strike?"

"Right here in our midst," said the Major, with solemn satisfaction. "Mrs. Remmick has the thing definitely settled. We are to start the ball rolling, and you will see a very pretty burst of speed when it gets down among the lieutenants. We can have no gain without some small loss, and according to Mrs. Remmick in this case we gain one colonel, and lose one set of quarters all 'round."

Mrs. Remmick raised one finger, and called out warningly, "Now, Major, I'm not so bad as that." She continued to Captain Lyndon,

"I am hoping some one will take that vacant set Colonel Randelmann had and so stop the trouble; for indeed it is a great trouble, just as you are settled in your quarters to have some one come along and turn you out."

"I agree with you," said Lyndon. "It might seem that the more pay and the more rank a man gets, the more careful he should be about inconveniencing and annoying others. But somehow, when we come to the question of choosing quarters, that pretty theory is lost sight of."

"Perhaps you would do away with the choosing of quarters altogether," said the Major, skeptically.

"Yes, I believe I would. The pay and allowances that go with long years of service and increased rank are all right; a man earns all he gets. But this other question presents itself to me as a mere matter of selfishness. These houses, all very much alike, are built by the government for the use of its officers, and I do not recognize it as a fact that any outward circumstance gives one man precedence over another in choice."

He spoke quite dispassionately, but the sentiment was not pleasing to the Major.

"It is hardly so much a matter of selfishness as of convenience, Lyndon," said he. "When a station is newly garrisoned, much worry and irritation is avoided by having quarters taken in succession from the ranking officer down."

"It could be settled by lot quite as satisfactorily. But that is not this case, Major. Here we have a garrison nicely settled, and the coming of one man may change the entire face of it."

"It is his privilege, and I would not deny him the exercise of it," said the Major, somewhat stiffly. Mrs. Remmick interposed to check his humor.

"The Major expects to be a colonel some day himself," said she in a half-aside to Lyndon. Remmick laughed as heartily then as either of them, though not so much at having remotely selfish motives attributed to his argument as at the faint shadow of a coming coloneley. But this was very well understood. Similarly, Lyndon had hopes of becoming a major.

"I hope I may live to see the day, and if he ranks me out, I shall bear him no ill-will," Lyndon declared heartily. "But at the same

time I should feel bound to protest against the system. If the Major had been sitting in this chair when I came in, and I had said, 'Give me that chair; I prefer it to any other in the room,' I should only have illustrated the working of the system."

"Not altogether," said the Major, mightily pleased to score a fine point. "Not a perfect illustration. You wouldn't have got it. I am the ranking officer."

"Well, if you came to my quarters and demanded *my* chair, then."

"That's inadmissible, too, because I should never think of doing such a thing. That is not army usage; it is not even common courtesy."

"For my part," said Mrs. Remmick, "I think courtesy should take precedence over the rights of rank. Don't you, Captain?"

"Its assumed rights — yes. Courtesy before all. Major, I am corrected. I should not wait for you to demand my chair; I should hasten to offer it to you."

A pleased murmur of approval greeted this statement of Lyndon's.

"Ye-es, courtesy is a good thing; it's all right," conceded the Major, after a little

pause; "but I believe in usage and the Regulations. Of course, if you can do anything for another without incommoding yourself —"

"Oh, Major! Where is your sense of hospitality!" screamed Mrs. Remmick, in dismay.

"It wouldn't be courtesy then, I fear," said Lyndon. "Now we have time and again seen some new lieutenant, whose rank hardly entitled him to a tent on the parade, come out with a wife, and no place to put her; harboring a general trust in the harmony of the world and the love all people must bear them, by virtue of their loving each other. Oddly, as it may seem, that trust is not altogether misplaced; for just as often we have seen senior officers — bachelors, of course — give up their own comfortable quarters and crowd themselves into uncomfortable spaces, simply as a matter of courtesy. The new man had no choice of quarters; they would give him a set of their own. The young couple probably do not fully appreciate such kindness till they have had years of the life, and the army has been rubbed into their very grain. But it is done, year after year."

"That is so," said Mrs. Remmick, with an approving nod of the head.

"Yes. It takes off what I suppose you would call the curse of the system, too," said the Major.

"Why, partly," consented Lyndon. "Only some fellows get tired of doing it in the course of years. They take their quarters and stick to them, unless ranked out."

"Well," observed Mrs. Remmick, after a pause, during which the two officers had made a trip to the sideboard in the dining-room, clinked glasses, and returned with a fresh cigar apiece, "as I said, I hope we won't be ranked out."

"Did you say that, my dear?" inquired the Major.

"Why, yes — or I meant it, anyway. We are all so nicely fixed now, and I had asked Millicent out for a visit. A niece of ours, Captain," she continued, turning to Lyndon. "She has never seen an army post, and she's said to be a very pretty girl, by her photograph."

"Oh, this is she," said Lyndon, making two steps to the mantel and openly admiring a likeness he had already glanced at several

times. "She is pretty, indeed. What is her name, Mrs. Remmick?"

"Millicent Harding. She is a daughter of my brother, and both her parents are dead. She has been studying art in Paris and New York, and I haven't seen her in years. Now she is alone, I think I have a duty towards her. And besides that, I really want to see her."

"It's another case of the army sister-in-law, Lyndon," said the Major, cheerily.

But Mrs. Remmick very properly objected to such sentiments.

"Major! How can you! Millicent is a sweet, lovely girl. I think the last time we were on leave you thought more of her than you did of me. And she's perfectly devoted to her art."

"Regularly wedded to it," coincided the Major. "Suppose she will bring it with her?" But Mrs. Remmick ignored him.

"I shouldn't have much hope of her coming if it were not for the new scenes and ways of life she will find to study," she said. "She will be no burden for entertainment upon you bachelor officers, whatever the Major may hint, for she is completely wrapped up in her work."

"She'll have all the bachelors in garrison posing for her pictures before she's been here a week," the Major declared.

"Speaking for one of them, I don't doubt it," said Lyndon; and the frank avowal caused inquiring smiles from both. Captain Lyndon was not regarded as a garrison gallant. He was in no way a ladies' man. At present he was newly promoted to a captaincy, and was devoting himself to his company in a way that called forth remark from all. When he declared his readiness to assume a pose at the will of an unknown girl artist, his speech was open to a suspicion of cynicism.

"At any rate," he said, as he rose to take his leave, "I hope you will not be disturbed in your comfortable quarters, and that your niece may make as intimate a study of army life as she desires. Now," he added to himself, "I guess I've squared myself for that break about ranking out."

The next afternoon, as he was passing Major Remmick's quarters, Mrs. Remmick came out on the porch and spoke to him.

"Of course you know Colonel and Mrs. Bruff have arrived and are staying with us?" she asked.

"I saw their ambulance come in this forenoon," he replied. "They had a hard ride from the railroad?"

"Not so very." She came down the steps and spoke in a low tone. "I was *so* afraid she would want these quarters when she saw them, but I couldn't do less than ask them here."

"That's the penalty of your high rank."

"Yes; but she isn't going to take them. They have decided on Colonel Randelmann's old set. I'm so glad!"

"I rejoice with you, and so will all the garrison. And now you can have your niece — the artist — "

"Millicent Harding," she prompted.

"Yes — Miss Harding — "

"Got a letter from her to-day. She will come. Oh, we shall be very gay now, Captain."

"I believe you. One girl sometimes goes a long way towards livening up a post."

"That's true enough. You are all coming in to-night?"

"Every one of us, from Eagan down to Wallace. The band will bray on the parade; ice-cream and cake will be served — Mrs.

Remmick and the dairy fates willing; a master of ceremonies will run affairs; and I guess we'll make the new Colonel think he's struck the finest regiment in all the service."

"As indeed he has," said Mrs. Remmick, proudly.

"Amen to that!" cried the Captain, passing on.

II

THERE was no doubtful forecast concerning the success of the reception to be tendered the new Colonel that evening. The regiment had as deep a pride in its social reputation as in its fighting record, and this was an occasion upon which it was ready to expend itself. It was not every day that it got a new commanding officer, and when it did, it thought no more than proper to give him a taste of its quality, so that he might the more highly appreciate his own rare good fortune.

And Colonel Bruff had a reputation of his own as well. He was known as one of the sternest, most uncompromising old-line fighters in the army, a man with a rigid sense of justice, and an impartial dispenser of old army discipline. The regiment was glad to get him, and glad to attest its joy. Such a man was bound to promote the efficiency of any command, and the regiment was proud

to be considered at all times highly efficient. There was no division of sentiment on that point. Where the honor of the regiment was concerned, the regiment was always united. It now rose to a point of social honor. It was desirable that Mrs. Bruff should admit that the regimental ladies entertained more delightfully than those in less favored portions of the army, and that Colonel Bruff should be impressed with the gallant and courteous bearing of his officers. Their bravery was a matter of record, and if Colonel Bruff needed to be refreshed concerning it, he would be obliged to consult the record itself. The regiment never exaggerated its old dangers; it spent no time in lauding its old glories; it was always looking up and pushing ahead to new ones.

The bachelor officers assembled at their mess-room, and came up the Line to Major Remmick's in a body. At the same time the married men, with their wives and daughters, came from their quarters. From every point of the garrison wherein the commissioned strength resided, small rivulets of blue and gold flowed, uniting in the effective stream that poured through Major Remmick's open

door. The word having gone forth that the reception would begin at a certain hour, it began at that hour, — not a moment sooner or later. It was a matter of pride with the regiment that this should be so.

"But talk about your procrastination! Punctuality is the thief of my time," breathed Wallace, the junior lieutenant, as he bound himself about with a gilded belt and joined the bachelors' column.

"How so?" demanded the man next him, vaguely.

"Because I was counting on a half-hour in which to prink and make myself look pretty, and I didn't get it, you were so confounded punctual. It's a clear case of robbery." Upon this, he was regarded with compassionate glances, as being one not yet addicted to all the regimental virtues.

Captain Eagan, flanked by his wife and supported by two daughters, was the first to pass the welcoming door. This was by design, as he was the next lower in rank to Major Remmick. Following this order of seniority came the captains, from Barrett down to Lyndon, and the first and second lieutenants, ending with Wallace.

Just within the parlor door stood Major Remmick, very purple as to the face, owing to his tightly buttoned dress-coat. Each succeeding relay was received by him, and by him presented to the Colonel. Then they were gently forced along to where Mrs. Remmick stood with Mrs. Bruff. Mrs. Remmick had not asked any of the garrison ladies to assist her in receiving, because she regarded Mrs. Eagan as unavailable, being a cavalry woman — Captain Eagan commanded the single troop of cavalry at the post. And having decided against the highest ranking lady, she would not pass over her, and take regimental ladies lower in rank. This was well understood. The regimental ladies approved of Mrs. Eagan's rejection, and of the delicate courtesy toward her that robbed them of invitations to assist; and Mrs. Eagan herself, seeing Mrs. Remmick receive alone, was mollified. It was as she herself would have done.

There was a certain stately rhythm and precision in the utterance by Major Remmick of the rank and name of each officer, and its repetition by Colonel Bruff. No breath was wasted; in that coat, the Major had none to

waste. Thus, from the Major: "Captain Burns, Mrs. Burns." And from the Colonel: "Good evening, Captain Burns; Mrs. Burns, good evening." "Captain Lyndon." "Good evening, Captain Lyndon." A single shake of the hand from each to each, dealt with military exactness; no favoritism. "Mr. Willard." "Good evening, Mr. Willard." The Major was below the captains now, and in conformity with army custom was presenting the lieutenants with the civilian prefix, "Mr." "Mr. Thompson, Dr. Sanders, Mr. Lawrence, Mr. Bates, Mrs. Bates, Mr. Miller." And so in slow procession to the last, when the Major unbent. "And here's the recruit, Mr. Wallace." "You have the left of the line, Mr. Wallace," said the Colonel, and all laughed at his ready application of a military expression. It did not matter that they had heard it similarly used many times before. Wallace blushed in great embarrassment under the unexpected pleasantry from a notoriously grim old disciplinarian. A little breath of relief went round the room, and all felt that the reception had opened very well indeed.

The ordeal of presentation passed, the good

Major stuck his thumbs in his belt, and betrayed his satisfaction in the smile that deepened on his purple countenance; and even the Colonel looked around and nodded to Mrs. Bruff in a manner expressive of his concurrence in the sentiment. The ladies chatted desperately among themselves, and the officers stood about erectly, with their hands clasped behind them, and pretended to enjoy easy converse; but very generally they kept one intelligent eye on the Colonel to observe what his mood or intention might be. Major Remmick, by virtue of his rank, seemed deputed to draw him out.

"Well, Colonel, you've seen the lot of us," said he, with the conciliatory air of a showman after a doubtful performance. "Infantry, cavalry, staff, doctors, and all."

"A fine looking set of men, Major," responded the Colonel, seeing what was expected of him. "I have been with many a regiment in my time, but none, I am sure, that it will afford me greater pleasure to command than this." The sentiment was echoed down the room from man to man, and induced a comfortable feeling towards the new commander.

"The regiment is not a muchly married one, is it, Mrs. Remmick?" inquired Mrs. Bruff.

"Not as much as some, Mrs. Bruff. Some of the companies at other stations have the full complement of wives, I believe; but those at headquarters have not. Don't you think so, Mrs. Burns?"

"Oh, yes, decidedly. They are very much," said Mrs. Burns, at random; for she had been telegraphing to her husband, and had not caught the conversation.

"But I am sure I shall find them pleasant," continued Mrs. Bruff, with determined amiability.

"Dear me, yes. The Major and I—well, we have been in the regiment for years, and there is absolutely *never* any trouble."

"Oh, we are quite like a family of sisters," cooed Mrs. Burns.

"Yes, indeed. I hope and believe you will find us all pleasant to serve with, Mrs. Bruff," said Mrs. Remmick, anxiously.

"Oh, I am quite sure of it," said Mrs. Bruff, positively.

Just then refreshments were brought in, and the attempts at chat ceased. The ladies

were settling themselves for the bit of lunch, and the men, standing against the wall, were watching the progress about the room with trays of the soldiers pressed into service for the night, and estimating their own ability to manage plate, cup, and saucer with but a single pair of hands.

There was one thing about it, Mrs. Remmick reflected in a comfortable state of mind; the china was good, and Mrs. Bruff could hardly fail to be surprised at its quality and condition, so far from a purchasing town, from a railroad; in fact, from civilization. Some of it was Mrs. Remmick's own, some had been loaned by Mrs. Burns, some by Mrs. Willard, and some by young Wallace, who had indulged his untrained fancy in an expensive mess kit just before joining. The silver, which was solid, had been gotten together in the same way, but its varieties of weight and of pattern made the levy rather in evidence. These reflections would have been disquieting to any but an army woman; but to Mrs. Remmick, accustomed through long years of service to all degrees of ingenious makeshifts, they favorably indicated the resources of the regiment, and she knew Mrs.

Bruff would look upon the matter in the same way. After all, as a final argument, Mrs. Remmick might have said that it was not *her* reception; it was the regiment's; everybody who could, had a hand in it, and it was only by a happy chance that her quarters were made use of for the purpose. It was altogether proper and quite to be expected that the regimental silver and china and napery should be thus gathered and exposed to view.

Buttered biscuits, half-way between hot and cold, were offered with small cups of chocolate. Cake and ice-cream followed. The men fought gallantly against odds to do justice to the fare; but more than one silently drew a comparison between this occasion and various evenings in camp, when a man might sit on a bent bush with the meat-can on his lap and the coffee-cup on the ground beside him, with the occasional arrival from ambush of unexpected bullets to give a zest to the appetite. By a curious hitch in their reasoning, those camp days were days of stern duty, and this, an evening of blandishment and pleasure; and they honestly held to that use of the qualifying terms, and attempted no transposition.

Mrs. Bruff, eating her ice-cream with a heavy spoon engraved "W," which did not stand for Remmick, took occasion to say it was very good. "It must be quite like having a dairy of one's own to live in the midst of a grazing country," she added.

"You will hardly believe me when I tell you it is next to impossible to get a drop of milk or cream," said Mrs. Remmick, earnestly, and the other ladies nodded their support of her assertion. "Here we are in what the Major calls a 'cow country,' but it's little enough milk or cream that we see. If it wasn't for Sergeant Burke, who keeps a cow, we should be at a pretty pass. The ranches don't supply us with anything. And the ice-cream, let me confide to you, is half corn starch." She communicated this startling information behind her hand in a whisper that was heard by all the ladies and half the men. But they received the statement with unconcern, for every family on the Line had been levied on for cream before resort was had to corn starch. And it was an open secret that condensed milk also had been brought into requisition.

"And the ice," continued Mrs. Remmick

before Mrs. Bruff could make more than an ejaculatory comment, — "the ice with which the cream was frozen came from Lake Michigan. That to me is the strangest thing of all, stationed as we are on the hot plains, two thousand miles from Michigan, and four days' march from a railroad. As the Major says, we have to go a good ways for our blessings these days."

"And I say it again. Didn't we have to go to Montana this time for Colonel and Mrs. Bruff?" asked the Major, who had come behind his wife's chair as she talked. Everybody laughed at this, some nervously, all unrestrainedly, and Mrs. Bates, the young wife of a young lieutenant, shook her fan at the Major and said he was perfectly killing. This was flattering to the Major's strain of humor. He was fortunate in having Mrs. Remmick to hold him in check, and to tell him from time to time that he was not so witty as he might imagine.

The conversation had been like a succession of detached fortifications crowning a row of eminences, with wide passages between. The fire from the hill-tops failed to search these spaces; but there was an able ally provided.

The regimental band had been ordered out, and was stationed on the parade directly in front of the Major's quarters. On a trip over the creek Mrs. Remmick had discovered in the store which dominated the frame-and-canvas town, a dozen Japanese lanterns, survivals of some Fourth of July stock in trade. These she had bought, and the field music and soldiers' boys held them above the heads of the bandsmen as they played. Under their influence, and spurred on by a hope of privileges and beer, the band played its very best, which was also its very loudest. Conversation was impossible while it was at work, and Lyndon, catching the Major in passing, shouted in his ear that it was a bright idea to get the band out. The Major could only grin and nod appreciatively as he went on.

It became apparent that the ceremonies of the evening were at an end with the refreshments, and there remained but the troublesome business of getting out. For this, the formation, offensive and defensive, was similar to that attending the getting in. Hands were taken and dropped, good-nights said, and assurances of a delightful evening repeated. Colonel Bruff had been fairly re-

ceived and acknowledged as the executive and administrative head of the regiment, and Mrs. Bruff had taken her place as First Lady. The new power was formally installed.

As they went down the Line from the Major's, some of the officers turned in with Lyndon at his quarters; and Lyndon hailed others who were ahead.

"Won't you fellows come in? We've got all night to do this in."

"Might as well continue the wheel," remarked Lawrence, who thereupon returned with a bachelor contingent. And Willard shouted back, "I'll come in immediately," which was taken to mean as soon as he had escorted Mrs. Willard home. Others came dropping in, and Lyndon had the pleasure of seeing his demijohn of a choice Monongahela brand deeply appreciated.

"Well, what do you all think of him?" suggested Burns, when a short retrospective silence had gathered on the group.

"The C. O.? He's all right. Seems to be a good sort of old man," said the speakers for all.

"He's a stickler, though, for regimental manners."

"Well, that's what we want, isn't it?"

"Yes, of course."

"It is good enough, far as it goes," said Lawrence. "But we want a grand old man at the head of affairs; a man that is a man, and not an automatic spool of red tape."

"I reckon the C. O. will give you variety enough. And red tape's all right in its way. Don't go sassing department methods," said Burns.

"Oh, it has its advantages, but taken as a steady diet it is wearisome. And this regiment can't spell itself with a big red R when it is lying back like this, peacefully making out monthly returns and running garrison courts. We'll be getting flabby in our muscles."

"It's a bloodthirsty boy, now isn't it?" said Lyndon, playfully knocking Lawrence between the shoulders. "One would look for a string of scalps at his waist, instead of a brand-new dress belt."

"I thought the old man had children," suddenly observed Eagan.

"Oh no; you're wrong. Never heard of any."

"But he had, though," said Major Rem-

mick, who had run out for a breath of air after the reception, and been attracted by the light in Lyndon's quarters.

"Go ahead, Major. Let's have it," cried the anticipative crowd. There was something in his manner that portended a story.

"Don't get excited; it isn't much. There was but one — a boy. I remember the little chap twenty years ago, when the Colonel and I were serving together in Kansas; he was a captain then, and I was a lieutenant. This boy was smart as lightning. He didn't take to the Colonel's idea of domestic discipline kindly, and as soon as he was old enough they sent him away to school. After that, he got into some bad row, we never knew what; but he was expelled, and the Colonel said he would never see him again. It was more than a mere school affair; he went dead against his father's orders in some other way. And the Colonel is hell-fire and a rod of iron. Anyway, that's all was known of that.

"Of a sudden, then, the Colonel and his wife went East on leave; and when they came back Mrs. Bruff was wearing black, and looked old; and the old man was even

grummer than ever. They were in mourning for their son."

A little murmur of sympathy went through the gathering, and men nodded gravely as they listened.

"It was very painful. Some of the ladies tried to sympathize with Mrs. Bruff, but the poor woman broke down in tears so that they had to quit. She could not bear to speak of it. And the Colonel invited no sympathy; he repelled it. He went about his duty looking exactly as he does to-day. So they have lived it down, and nobody says 'son' to them. It's been hard enough on them, no doubt."

"It would have been tough on the boy had he lived," said young Wallace, with ready feeling for juvenile trials.

"What! Boy? I'm talking about the father. He's a law to himself, and nothing can swerve him from his idea of justice. He would have been impartially correct to his son — probably was; but that's all."

"But that isn't enough, is it, Major?" asked Lyndon, quietly. And Wallace thanked him with a grateful look.

"Well — he's just, anyway. And that's of first importance in our line of life," per-

sisted the Major. He had a weakness for maintaining his own unswerving allegiance to discipline; it was when theory was put aside and the moment of practice came that his true belief was made known.

Eagan gave a harsh sort of a laugh that turned all eyes to him.

"I'm thinking, Lyndon, your company will come in for a touch of his iron hand," said he.

"That will be all right," said Lyndon, with affected carelessness. "He will give me justice, according to the Major here, and that is enough for me." With the conservatism of officers of long standing he shrank from discussing regimental affairs with men from other regiments. All friction and all experiment, he held, should be covered from the outward view.

"Well, I like him, and I believe he likes us," said Willard. "But that's neither here nor there. It isn't a question of likes and dislikes, but only of duty under whatever conditions."

"Yes, we all like him," said the others. But it was more a matter of pride than of affection. He was a good commanding officer,

and under him they were satisfied of a vigorous administration.

Lawrence was the last to say good-night. He was Lyndon's first lieutenant, and purposely staid behind.

"If the C. O. should go to coming down like a thousand bricks," said he when they were alone, "he'll be likely to take a fall out of you, Lyndon."

"I'm not on the run yet," answered Lyndon. "I know most of the captains think I am too lenient with my men, but you know for yourself what kind of discipline I have."

"None better."

"You know my views. I don't believe in the machine soldier; I don't believe in the court martial for every petty break; I do believe in looking after the physical and moral welfare of the men. It isn't a matter of regulations, but of principle. I hope the old man won't go to being crabbed, for it might be unpleasant."

"I hope not. And anyhow, I'll back your judgment with all the chips I've got," declared Lawrence, warmly.

III

The morning after the reception Colonel Bruff took over the command of the post from Major Remmick. It was not an affair of ceremony. While guard-mounting was in progress the two officers came out, and walked together slowly towards the headquarters building. The Colonel stopped for a moment to look narrowly at the men in line, constituting the new guard, and to note the appearance of the band. He made no criticism; the Major expected none. The habit of inspection was one they possessed in common, drawing it from their service. They knew the men of one regiment should, theoretically, appear no better than those of any other, and that in practice there was seldom a noticeable difference. A certain standard of requirements was exacted from all; for those who fell below, squad drill and the "setting up" exercises until the requisite soldierly facility should be acquired. Had the guard turned

out slouchily, the Colonel might have spoken of it, or the Major felt called upon for an apologetic statement of cause. But there was no occasion for criticism, and as for compliment — it is possible that the Colonel felt a little thrill of pride at sight of his own men, for this was to be his regiment, now and henceforth, till promotion should again touch his shoulder straps. But he would not have betrayed such an emotion to the Major, or have allowed its existence to be even suspected. Stern self-control and the suppression of emotion were parts of the Colonel's stock-in-trade. His voice might have betrayed him; and so, no matter how highly he might think of his men, no matter how strongly their natty appearance might impress him, not a syllable escaped. After gazing a moment in contemplative silence, he strode on to the office, and the Major subordinately followed, a fraction of a pace to the rear.

The office door stood ajar, and they passed within, to the room devoted to the adjutant's use. Save for the orderly on duty, standing at attention statuesquely, it was vacant. The adjutant, Lieutenant Willard, was at that moment conducting guard-mounting;

they could hear his voice ringing across the parade in the commands preparatory to marching in review. Straight beyond was the office of the sergeant-major; and turning through an interior door to the left, they entered the office of the commanding officer.

"Colonel, I turn over the command to you," said Major Remmick at this point.

The Colonel cast a glance over the interior. The national and regimental flags stood in their cases in the corner; there were the usual official books of reference, the plain office furnishings of a simply conducted military post. His observant eye took it all in, even as he made acknowledgment.

"Very well, Major," said the Colonel, quietly. The two officers touched their cap visors in slight military salute. The Colonel sat down behind the flat-topped desk, ready to administrate the affairs of the post. Major Remmick drew up a chair, and the two spoke of matters connected with the office. Wallace, going by to the post library, glanced in and saw them thus. To the group he found over the books he said the Major was giving the C. O. pointers, and that the gentlemen present had better turn over a new leaf each in

deportment immediately. They smiled significantly at his irreverent youth, and he sank behind an old copy of a daily paper, and assiduously read the advertisements.

The Major was speaking of the commissioned personnel of the regiment. "The staff has shown itself efficient," said he. "Mr. Willard as adjutant and Mr. Thompson as quartermaster are capable of any duties in their departments, and unless you have changes in view — "

"I have none, Major," said the Colonel, quietly. "I presume they will send in their resignations as is customary on the advent of a new commanding officer, but I do not expect to accept them. I shall no doubt be quite satisfied with the appointments made by my predecessor, Colonel Randelmann."

The Major heard him with pleasure. "I think you will," he rejoined. "You will find the commanders of companies quite generally attentive to discipline, and the command is in accordingly fine trim. Of course, all do not agree as to the best methods, and do not always enforce the letter of the regulations. But the general result is good." The Major stumbled painfully through this statement.

He wanted to say a good word for Lyndon, whom he liked, before it should be possible for the Colonel to take exception to any of his methods. But what he did say only aroused questioning suspicion in the Colonel's mind.

"I do not see how there can be any disagreement. The regulations are very explicit. Please explain yourself, Major." The Colonel tapped nervously on the desk as he spoke.

"I mean degrees of leniency. The same infringement of discipline does not have the same weight with all of them. We have some captains who would yet string a man up, or buck and gag him; and we have others who I believe would never think of such a thing."

"Regulations are against any corporal punishment," observed the Colonel. "But sometimes the temptation is great. I should prefer to err on the side of strictness. That, to my mind, produces the best results."

"Yes, sir. But in this case we have the record to show for the result. The guardhouse book will show that the prisoners from the companies with lenient captains are no more in number than from others."

"Which proves nothing save that leniency

is there. It does not establish discipline," said the Colonel, testily.

"That is so. And yet, I would add that from one such company desertion is practically unknown. That is a desirable feature. I do not wish to be understood as advocating any departure from regulations, Colonel," added the Major, as though in fear of being thought biased.

"I should hope not, sir. Regulations are made to be observed," said the Colonel, drily. And then he added with a keen glance: "Which is this model company?"

"I had reference to Captain Lyndon's company. It may appear a bit strange that he, who is the junior captain, should seem most successful in company discipline. Old stagers who served through the war do no better than he. It may be his progressive ideas — "

"Progressive nonsense!" belched the Colonel so vehemently that the Major started. "I don't want any of this stuff and nonsense. Every new lieutenant comes in with new-fangled nursery ideas of coddling tough, grown-up men who fight for a living. A pretty lot they'd have to take the field with! I will have none of it. Major, this regiment has

but one guide for conduct — and the book of Regulations is its Bible!"

He grew red in the face and glared upon the junior officer as though in him he had discovered an arch-offender. The Major shuffled his feet uneasily, and had no reply to make. He was conscious that guard-mounting was over, that the adjutant was in his office without, and that other officers had gathered there in accordance with the morning custom. He knew by the outer stillness that the Colonel's outburst had not been unnoticed by them, and that they would in their hearts say he was receiving the first wigging at Colonel Bruff's hands. This rankled. It mattered not that it was a misconception, or that he might open the subject to them and explain it in a way to down the idea. He knew he could not speak of it first to any one, and that no one would mention it to him. Such proceeding would have been without the bounds of official courtesy. By and by the incident would be forgotten; but till then he would bear the uncomfortable knowledge that the captains were secretly sympathizing with him, and that the graceless lieutenants, whom he had himself occasion-

ally rated, were chuckling to see the tables turned. It was simply one of the petty annoyances of the service. It was now his part to preserve a calm unmoved exterior, and theirs to avoid any indication of having heard aught.

A knock sounded on the door. "Come in!" called the Colonel, unnecessarily loud. His irritation had not yet abated. It was the old and new officers of the day, reporting the state of the post for the past twenty-four hours, and asking orders for the new tour. They presented the guard report for examination, and Colonel Bruff went through it systematically. He thought fit to call attention to one entry, holding his finger on the line as he did so.

"'Burton, H company, confined at midnight by Captain Burns. Released at reveille by order of his company commander.' Who is his company commander?"

"Captain Lyndon, sir."

"What was the man's offence?"

"I don't know, sir," said the old officer of the day. "I inquired, but the sergeant of the guard could tell me nothing. He was both confined and released without my knowledge."

"I shall inquire into this," said the Colonel, stiffly. "If a man's offence is sufficient to warrant his being placed under charge of the guard, he should certainly be brought before a court martial. This haphazard confining and releasing is playing at cross-purposes. No new orders, gentlemen; that will do."

With another comprehensive salute the two officers swung on their heels and went from the room. Colonel Bruff turned to Major Remmick with the queerest of smiles edging his lips.

"I profess to you, Major, the kindliest feeling toward my command, commissioned and enlisted," said he. "Captain Lyndon is undoubtedly an excellent officer, and I should dislike to — " He made a little gesture with his hand, at which the Major nodded. "I know it is a custom with some commanding officers to put a man in the guard-house and withdraw him again, leaving no official record of the matter beyond the entry in the guard-book. I do not approve of that."

The adjutant entered then with the consolidated morning report, the day's passes, and various other papers, which he laid before the Colonel.

"I shall request you and Mr. Thompson to continue on the staff during the remainder of your terms of appointment," said the Colonel to him at sight of two official forms of resignation. Willard bowed in acknowledgment. "Charges against Private Burton," continued the Colonel, picking up another paper.

"He was released this morning, sir," said Willard.

"I understand so. I wish to see Captains Burns and Lyndon regarding it." He touched the bell on his desk, and the orderly appeared in the doorway, in answer. Willard despatched him in search of the two officers. While he was gone, the other routine matters of the morning were attended to.

"Captain Burns," said the Colonel, when the two officers arrived, "I wish to know why you confined Private Burton last night?"

"He was out of his quarters, sir, and near the officers' line. As I was going home about midnight I saw him in the shadow, near the quarters of Major Remmick. He would give no reason for being there, and so I confined him."

"Why did you release him this morning,

Captain Lyndon?" asked the Colonel, with an air of strict impartiality.

"He was reported absent from the company at reveille. I found him in the guard-house. He had not been drinking — he does not drink. He is one of my most trustworthy men. When he assured me he was bent on no harm, I believed him. He asked me not to press him for a reason for his being out at midnight, and I respected his request. He did not seek to avoid punishment; he did not complain. I released him on my own responsibility, for he is a man whom I can trust." Lyndon delivered himself of this in as unimpassioned a manner as possible. He believed from his foreknowledge that the Colonel's judgment would be against him, as he knew the sentiment of Captain Burns to be. He did not care so much about the last matter, however; he and Burns had already had their explanation.

"Hereafter," said the Colonel, slowly, "when a man is put in the guard-house, I will myself judge of the propriety of his imprisonment, and will myself give the order for his release. I can understand, Captain Lyndon, your natural pique at having one

of your men imprisoned by another officer with no word of it to you; but you should regard the present circumstances."

"I am not aware, Colonel, that I have acted from pique in this case," said Lyndon, protesting.

"Hereafter you will not act at all. I shall myself control the discipline of the post. And you will now, Captain Lyndon, proceed to your company barracks, and cause Private Burton to be replaced under charge of the guard. That will do."

After that sentence of absolute dismissal, there was nothing for it but to go. Argument would have been useless, and possibly worse than that. The Colonel had turned from the two officers, and was busying himself with papers as though he had been alone. After all, the autocratic way has much in it that is admirable.

Once outside, Burns grasped Lyndon's hand. "This is most unfortunate, old man," said he. There could be no bar to his talking to Lyndon of the event, for he had been a participant. "If I could have foreseen this, your man might have slept all night on the porch of the Colonel himself before I'd have said a word to him."

"Yes, I can appreciate that," said Lyndon, "but I fear I can't keep with you on that lay."

"What do you mean?"

"Burton being in, I would have liberated him just the same, let the consequences be what they may."

"Yes, I know you would. Well, that's all right. Look here, Lyndon. You may be lenient with your men, but it strikes me you are strict enough with yourself. In this case you would hold yourself to your idea of duty, while I would let duty slide."

"That will do for talk; I know you. But seriously, Burns — what he said, you know — about a bit pique — "

"Rot and nonsense! Don't I know it? You forget I've been some years in the regiment with you, Lyn. And now, to prove it, I'll tell you what I think of our brand-new colonel." He made a tube of his hands, and otherwise evinced a desire for secrecy on the open parade, within sight of all the doors and windows of garrison.

"Well?" said Lyndon, laughing at his absurdity.

"That he is a dandy in the field and a

devil in the garrison. It takes some of both kinds to make our tight little army. Run along now and put your man in the guard-house."

And there being absolutely no help for it, Lyndon did as he was bid.

IV

THE absolutism displayed by Colonel Bruff in the small matter of Private Burton was regarded by the garrison as a fair sample of what might be expected at all times. Severity had been anticipated, for the Colonel's reputation was established throughout the length and breadth of the army. If some had looked for a period of gentle administration at the first, they were disappointed. Colonel Bruff was long accustomed to command, and from the moment he sat in the seat of the colonel of the regiment he had been possessed of no uncertainty as to his course of action. As a result of army experience, he acted vigorously and promptly. The Burton case came up on his first day of command, and gave him an opportunity. Otherwise the garrison might not have had a taste of his quality so soon.

A garrison court martial was at once convened, to remain in force during the presen-

tation of fifteen cases. There were already several prisoners in the guard-house, doing penance for minor offences, and they, with Burton, were at once brought before the court. Without the spoken expression of an opinion, the commissioned force seemed possessed of the idea that their own duties might be performed with a trifle more snap than had been common, and still no harm be done. Time had been when a man might lie a close prisoner in the guard-house for a week, while the judge advocate made futile efforts to gather the members of his court; and even at that, the trial might result in a finding of "not guilty." The soldier had then no redress for the wrongful imprisonment he had endured, but accepted it stoically as an incident of military life. But now, when young Wallace went forth to find his court, all three of the members were promptly on hand, and met, per notification, of an early morning hour, in the court-martial room.

The squad of prisoners came over from the guard-house, attended by a corporal and a number of sentries. One at a time they were summoned before the court, and stood trials of an average length of five minutes. They

were mainly charged with drunkenness and absence from various military duties. They seldom attempted any defence, acknowledged their guilt with unexpressive countenances, and were at once remanded to the guard-house. They could forecast their punishment with considerable accuracy; for a garrison court had but limited powers, and quite generally adjudged penalties in accordance with the terms of an accepted schedule. Thus, a soldier on the lingering edge of virtue might say to himself: "If I go to the sutler's to-night and get drunk, I shall miss reveille in the morning; then the court will soak me for a two-dollar blind. Is it worth while?" The answer would be dependent upon the soldier's predisposition and the attractions then offered by the sutler; but if it was in the affirmative, the court seldom failed to satisfy his expectations.

When Burton's case was called, no defence was made. Wallace, in his dual capacity of judge advocate of the court and of counsel for the prisoner, had ascertained from Burton that his plea would be "guilty," and no witnesses had been summoned for either side. The charge was read, the plea of "guilty"

entered, and Burton remanded to the custody of the guard. The court reached a finding in accordance with the plea. There was then a slight pause.

"Will some one propose a sentence?" asked Wallace.

Major Remmick, who was president of the court, came from behind his newspaper. "The charge was —?" he inquired absently.

"Out of barracks after taps," said Wallace.

"And he pleaded guilty?"

"He did."

"Ah-h, somebody give a guess. It ain't worth much," he concluded, returning to his paper. It was too slight a matter to occupy his attention on a drowsy forenoon. No one appeared impressed with the enormity of the offence.

"Dollar," at length was suggested by Lawrence, the junior member. No other penalty was proposed.

"One dollar?" inquired Wallace, directing an interrogatory glance on each member. Nods and grunts signified assent. "Fine, one dollar," said Wallace, making a note of it. Lawrence laughed cynically.

"Wish now I'd said two bits," said he.

"No more cases to come before the court," Wallace announced, with relief. It was his duty to write out in prescribed form the proceedings in each case tried, and to submit them to the adjutant the next morning. He had quite enough to occupy him for the day.

"If's no objection, court's adjourned. Court is adjourned," declared the Major, rising from his chair and buckling on his sword. Then the dispensers of justice walked forth with a step of conscious integrity from the scene of their completed labors.

Garrison duty was not arduous, only tedious. The Line was crowded, many officers were present for duty, and there was nothing to be done beyond an occasional roll-call, an hour of drill, and the sundown parade. It is not to be doubted that thanks were offered up for even the milk-and-watery excitement of a court martial.

It was a custom with the officers to assemble each morning at headquarters to salute the commanding officer and to exchange greetings with each other. After this formality, time would occasionally hang heavy and show a disposition to linger in the garrison, till many a man had more of it on his hands than he

knew what to do with. The shadow on the old sundial, planted midway of the parade, crawled with exasperating slowness; the garrison flag hung motionless in glowing bars; the flagstaff listed wearily from the perpendicular; dogs arose, stretched, and slept again; the pulses lagged; the world ceased swinging; and over all was unappeasable time, slowly dissolving in the silence of eternity. In these echoes of great solitudes, young and unaccustomed lieutenants sometimes became morose and irritable; but oftener they developed a congeniality with surroundings, and lived a placid, contented, routine-duty existence, broken only by sudden and unfrequent excursions of a warlike character in the field. These were anticipated with eagerness, and dwelt upon afterwards with tenacious regard. Wallace had said, soon after joining, that he was disappointed in the life; he had looked for something active and stirring, and he thought his athletic training had missed of its purpose. But after a few of those emergency calls for outside duty, he admitted that there was another side to it, and was satisfied.

"And after all," said Burns, who was Wallace's captain and the patient victim of

his soul's outpouring, "garrison life isn't so bad. There's one feature you forget."

"What is that?" asked Wallace, perfunctorily.

"The ladies," said Burns, with finality.

"Oh yes; they are ever with us," returned the youngster. "I didn't forget them. How could I?" And then he laughed wickedly at the memory of stories told him of garrison gossips.

"No, I didn't suppose you had forgotten them, but I thought you might remember them a little better. It comes pretty hard on them sometimes, this life does; but they don't grumble half as bad as the men. I've been in the army thirty-five years, and married for every one of those; I have had some experience in these matters," said Burns.

"Yes, I reckon that might be so," assented Wallace.

"What would a post be like without them?" demanded the Captain.

Wallace considered farsightedly. "I know," said he. "It would be just a hell-hole."

"That's what," said Burns, emphatically. He added disconnectedly; "That's good whiskey of yours. Where'd you get it?"

"It's some I had sent up from Galveston," replied Wallace, setting out the glasses. "How!" said the two simultaneously, and drank. "It is smooth stuff, but 'most gone. I'll have to come down to every-day drinking-fluid pretty soon," Wallace added.

"All whiskey's good, but some is better than others," said Burns, speaking from his experience of thirty-five years and quoting the "Kentucky Colonel."

Wallace lay back in his chair, and twirled his empty glass uneasily. He was thinking of making a confession, and dreaded to do so, the more as he knew it would be entirely unexpected by Burns. It had several times presented itself to his mind as the proper thing to do, but never had an occasion so propitious as this occurred. Burns had fairly introduced the conversation, and had induced this thought, in speaking of the army women. At last he cleared his throat with so mighty an effort that Burns looked up in surprise.

"Bronchitis?" he asked.

"No. Heart trouble," said Wallace, with an uneasy laugh.

"I'm sorry," said Burns, with a doubting twinkle in his eye.

"I ought to tell you," began Wallace, "as you're my captain, and I'll likely be with your company some years, I think I ought to tell you something of my plans." He hesitated, and Burns looked at him kindly. "Before many months, I want to get a leave, and go back East. There — I'm — engaged to a girl, back there — and I want to marry her and bring her out."

He stopped quite out of breath and with his heart in his throat, wondering how Burns would take it. Some captains, he knew, preferred bachelor lieutenants, because they required but little baggage space on marches from station to station.

"How soon do you mean to do this?" asked Burns.

"We haven't settled on the date yet," said Wallace, at once introducing the girl as a factor, "but within a year, surely."

"Well, if I might give you a bit of advice — "

"Certainly."

"I would say to wait till you rank somebody. You are the junior lieutenant now, and would have to depend on charity for a housekeeping set of quarters."

"It's a shame the government doesn't provide more quarters!" declared Wallace, angrily, voicing a sentiment as old as the army. The Captain looked at him with an amused expression, and said: —

"That's so. But the government's quite shameless in the matter." Then he added in an entirely different tone, "I suppose you thought this would surprise me, didn't you?"

"Why, yes. I am sure no one knew it. I have told no one but you," replied the boy, himself surprised.

"That's where you are wrong. Everybody knows it, — 'everybody' meaning the ladies and those they have admitted to their confidence. So I have been expecting this from you."

"I am glad I told you," said Wallace, simply. "But how did they know?"

"By the chance exercise of a little feminine ingenuity for which they might be praised, not blamed," said Burns. "It comes from the weakness of Savage, the old soldier who distributes the mail. He is so old and decrepit that he can do nothing else, you know, so he is kept at that till an opportunity comes for sending him to the Soldiers' Home.

He is a box of chatter and gossip, and takes a childish delight in playing postman. He never forgets the quantity or quality of any one's mail. To test his memory, the ladies sometimes ask him how others on the Line have fared. 'Was there any mail for Mrs. Burns this morning?' one would ask. 'Yes, ma'am, two letters and a postal,' he would say. 'And did Miss Burns have any?' 'She had a paper and one letter, but I couldn't make out the postmark.' So it would go. They say it is all for the pleasure of testing Savage's memory, but it might be turned to practical account. You probably see how they became satisfied you were spoken for?"

"I suppose so," said Wallace, slowly.

"Many letters — similar appearance — square envelopes — feminine handwriting — same postmark — easy enough, you see." Burns laughed good-naturedly, but Wallace was not happy.

"I don't mind it's being known," said he, "but in that way — You know, I don't like it. Of course there's no harm done, but it shows a spirit that — that I don't like. It is too much like interference. It doesn't matter this time, but some time it might be different."

"But it's a fine check, don't you see?" persisted Burns. "A fellow is going to walk pretty straight when he knows that every woman in garrison will be listening to the sound of his steps. It is a great moral engine," he added, laughing with a touch of cynicism.

"I think, Captain, that an officer in the army should be very careful how he walks, without regard to comment. You know we are always hearing about the 'high army sense of honor,' and officers are expected to be a little more strict in their ideas of right than other men. I don't object to that — I rather like it; I want to be thought very honorable. But we both know that officers are given to fostering that notion among civilians; and here we get down to inside facts, and find that they have to have a spur to stand in fear of. I tell you it makes me feel that there's no more honor in the army than out of it, and I've always flattered myself that there was." Wallace looked very soldierly as he said this, and quite ready to renounce everything for the sake of an ideal standard of honor.

"It's a grand check," repeated Burns,

lamely, harking back over Wallace's fine outburst. "It is an excellent thing when you come to look at it in that way."

"But I don't look at it that way," persisted Wallace.

"Never mind: it's all right. You will — after you are married," laughed the Captain.

V

For an unfledged chick at soldiering and a presumable ignoramus in the fine art of strategy, Wallace did some very good work after the visit of his captain. In the course of his thoughts that night he decided that it would be impolitic for him to wait for the suggestive glances and words of the ladies to worm from him the fact of his engagement, and he was sure that would be their next step. For himself and for the girl he meant to marry, it would be much better that he should bravely announce the condition of his expectations.

Sallying forth the next day, he looked up and down the Line for a weak point on which to make his attack; and seeing a concourse of ladies on Mrs. Remmick's porch, concluded that a kind fate had thrown them in his way, and turned towards them at once. He preferred to engage the enemy *en masse* rather than to scatter his force from point

to point, and be obliged to trust in many independent tongues for the telling. As he walked, he whistled. Object, apparent unconcern.

"Here comes Man-With-A-Girl-In-The-East," said Mrs. Bates beneath her breath as he approached. Every one looked up.

"Oh! Mr. Wallace! Dear me," murmured Mrs. Remmick.

"Don't let him hear you call him that!" gurgled Miss Burns in Mrs. Bates's ear. "If he should know that we know what we know, it would spoil all the fun!" She snuggled in her seat with a kittenish motion, and anticipated Wallace's arrival with enjoyment. She had acquired the certain age at which single women enjoy inflicting delicate torture on a male victim.

"Good morning, everybody!" called Mr. Wallace, genially, throwing off his cap and seating himself on the lower step. There was a chorus of glad replies. Mrs. Remmick pressed him to come up on the porch, but he would not. "I like this place," said he. "It is safer. I can talk with you and gaze upon you all from afar, and if need be, I can execute a masterly retreat."

"The idea of running away from us!" ejaculated Mrs. Eagan. The group laughed shrilly at the mental picture of a lone lieutenant fleeing down the Line from their presence. The two little girls of Dr. Sanders came laughing down the steps, and sat beside him and held his hands with juvenile freedom.

"You can't run away from us," they declared triumphantly.

"I'd never want to. But why couldn't I?"

"Because we'd run away with you," they gurgled.

"Well! Bravo! Mrs. Remmick, here are two deserters from your camp," cried Wallace. "Are there more to follow? At this rate I'll soon be strong enough to hold my own against you."

"We see so little of you nowadays, Mr. Wallace," interjected Mrs. Bates, mildly taking him to task. "Are you *so* busy?"

"Not so busy now as before the mails got so irregular. That deranges my daily plan of life," said he, with a smile intended to provoke comment. It had the desired effect.

"Oh, Mr. Wallace! Have you so many correspondents, then? Or is it all to one?

You neglect us shamefully! We *thought* there was something on your mind."

"Not on my mind — my heart; and such a weight! Ah! If I dared unfold — But, no. And here comes Savage with the mail, after an unexplained absence of three days. All other considerations will now kindly sink from sight."

The old soldier came limping laboriously up the Line, and stopped at the group. He had mail for nearly everybody, but before delivering it he performed his more immediate military duty of saluting Wallace punctiliously.

"Leftenant, I knocked at your door, but I didn't get no answer, so I just left your mail on the hall table," said he.

"That was all right, Savage. What was it?"

"There were the papers, sir, and some official correspondence, and three letters, sir."

"Three! That's one a day for the past three days. Are they alike or different, Savage?"

"All alike, sir, with big square envelopes, and long slantin' handwritin'."

"Ah, yes. Those will be from my fian-

cée." He said this as though to himself. There was an unmistakable rustle of surprise above him on the porch, which he noted with satisfaction.

"Yes, sir, I expect they be," assented Savage, with the deferential manner of a soldier in the presence of his officer's opinion. "Shall I go and fetch them up to you, sir?"

"No, never mind, Savage. They'll keep. It's all right." Then, as the old soldier saluted and limped away, he turned and nipped an outburst of pretty exclamation.

"That slipped out unawares," said he, deceitfully. "It was awfully awkward of me to speak so before Savage, but it was kind of him to agree with me. It shows we have an understanding. Just suppose that he had denied the statement — what a pickle I should have been in!" He laughed a little at the notion.

"But are you really, truly, engaged, then? And ought we to congratulate you?" queried Mrs. Bates, eagerly, and in the greatest doubt.

"If you don't, I shall take it as very unkind of you, I am sure; for I really and truly am engaged, and I really, truly, came up just

now to announce the fact. Wasn't that kind of me? You will overlook my abrupt method, I am sure. And here's her picture," he added, handing up a photograph. It was passed from hand to hand, and everybody said she was a very pretty girl.

"Now tell me that you're all immensely surprised," he implored, when he had gotten his property back.

"Indeed we are. You were never suspected," declared several, in close succession and with varying degrees of emphasis.

"Never suspected it in the world?" he insisted, looking from one to another in the group, inquiringly.

"Never. Never," they repeated.

"I am glad of that, for I like to be the bearer of good news and pleasant surprises. I didn't know but Savage had gotten ahead of me, and betrayed my confidence; but fortunately I find him trustworthy."

"But you haven't told us her name!" cried some one, suddenly. And others at once demanded her name as their just due, after having praised her photograph.

But here Wallace grew red, and refused to be cajoled. He could not bring himself to

speak her name before these women. There were some among them to whom he had no objection; they had not lent themselves to the deception. But he harbored a strong feeling of resentment against the others for the spirit of petty inquisitiveness they had displayed; and before them his lips refused to speak the loved words.

"She is no one you know, I'm sure," said he, somewhat ungraciously. "I'll tell you all some time — before the cards are out." Further than this he would not say. And just then the orderly issued from headquarters and blew officers' call on the bugle in a nervous staccato that betokened something unusual. "I'm in luck to-day," said Wallace, ambiguously; and he immediately hurried away to join the officers then gathering in Colonel Bruff's office.

Although the call was blown at an unusual hour, the group of ladies did not display a marked interest in it. There had been times in the experience of some of them when it had been a forerunner of months of dangerous and difficult campaigning, during which they had been forced to remain alone and uninformed in stagnated posts. The memories

of these days drove the blood back upon their hearts, and they looked at one another questioningly. But a moment's reflection reassured them, and they did not voice the fear that had momentarily crept in. It happens that women in the army continually develop a rare degree of courage. On this occasion the lack of recent rumors of Indian troubles led them to believe that nothing serious was in the wind; it might be some new feature of garrison discipline, or possibly some detached service, but nothing to cause general uneasiness. So they bent to the work in their hands, and discussed the announcement made by Wallace.

Hitherto, it had been only whispered, but now that Wallace himself had sanctioned it, they could speak openly. The prospect, however remote, of a new bride at the station, was pleasantly exciting. They reflected that she would wear the latest Eastern styles direct from the makers, which they could only build for themselves from published fashion plates and patterns. Thus her entrance would be attended with danger to herself; for an assertive and emphatic manner of apparel would be construed as a flaunt or a menace;

and while her triumph would be as short-lived as the fashions themselves, yet she could be made to do penance in many ways for a long time after. And so the buzz passed from clothes to accomplishments, and looks, and nature, and family; till Mrs. Eagan burst into a loud and disconcerting laugh, at which the infantry ladies looked up, displeased.

"Dear me!" said she. "How we are running on, talking of her as if she was to come to-morrow. As like as anyway, half of us will never see her. To me, it would be far more interesting to know why Mr. Wallace made the announcement as he did."

"I did not see anything peculiar about it," said Mrs. Remmick, tentatively, looking about her for support; and the ladies rallied to her with assenting nods. There was nothing strange about it, to them.

"Well, it is a little different from the way in *our* regiment," said Mrs. Eagan, in explanation. "There, the announcement is always made first at the bachelors' mess, and the health of the bride-to-be is drunk in champagne, and there are congratulations, and a good, sociable time generally. It is after that when the ladies learn it."

"Yes? That is a very pleasant custom — for some regiments — I'm sure," said Mrs. Remmick, assenting with care. "With us, we have no settled custom; it has never been thought necessary or worth while. Our officers are very considerate of the ladies, and knowing that we take a special interest in such matters, usually make announcements directly to us. I am sure *we* appreciate their kindness very much."

"Oh! That would never do for us. The regiment before everything else!" declared Mrs. Eagan, setting her voice on an unpleasantly high key. Her loyalty was unbounded, and she felt compelled to uphold the practices of her regiment against all comers.

"Yes, that is the cavalry way," said Mrs. Remmick, with commiserating indulgence. "It is very delightful. But how dear the thought to *us* that *we* are first! I do not believe our regiment suffers through the native chivalry of its officers."

No, indeed! Her cohort of ladies agreed with her. And they set their stitches with careful precision as they reflected, between shots, on the advantage of belonging to a superior branch of the service. But Mrs.

Eagan unfortunately betrayed a loss of temper.

"Well, I must say I don't think there is much chivalry in telling what is already known. With us, the officers take the bull by the horns every time. They don't go 'round, grabbing at his tail," said she.

"Oh, Mrs. Eagan!" exclaimed several, in shocked tones. "That is perfectly dreadful!"

"Mr. Wallace acted very well about it," pursued Mrs. Remmick, in the smoothest voice. Her manner was not indicative of the slighest warmth of feeling. "He made the announcement to suit himself, which was quite independent and quite right. You really cannot mean that his engagement was known — that he had already told it to others?"

"It was as good as known," declared Mrs. Eagan. "What with questioning poor, old, half-witted Savage, and putting two and two together — "

"Dear Mrs. Eagan! You give us credit for too much perception! Remember, please, we are only infantry."

Mrs. Eagan knotted her work together. "Well, I must run home. I see the Captain

coming from headquarters now. After all, the main thing is the getting married."

"*Must* you go? Good by! No, the rest don't signify," they called after her. Then they settled themselves with little restful sighs, and looked upon Mrs. Remmick gratefully.

"You are what *I* call a loyal woman, Mrs. Remmick," declared Mrs. Burns.

"My dear, don't mention it," said the Major's wife, with true sincerity. "I do so detest these little garrison spats and wrangles, and yet, when you see one coming you can't run away from it. I don't know why it is," she continued, shaking her head, "that the infantry and cavalry and artillery are always at each other's throats, to say nothing of the staff at odds with all three. It doesn't seem right. It is not pleasant, but I suppose it has to be so," she concluded with fatalistic resignation.

"It's professional jealousy, like actors, and — and those people," said wise little Mrs. Bates, giggling at her own theory.

The officers were now seen issuing from headquarters, and several came directly up the parade to where the ladies sat.

"I wish Mrs. Eagan had staid to see that," remarked Mrs. Willard. "Coming straight to tell us all the news."

"Yes; that substantiates my theory," said Mrs. Remmick, as she rose to receive the officers. "Come up, gentlemen. We are all attention."

"It isn't much," began the Major. "Nothing but a stage robbery — "

"The stage! And Millicent — " ejaculated Mrs. Remmick, in fright.

"Millicent! She hasn't come yet, has she? Calm yourself, my dear; it is all right. The Colonel is going to put out a detail to ride with the stage and escort it each way. Millicent will have no trouble whatever."

"It is most interesting," Lyndon declared. "He is a single man — "

"Like myself," said Wallace, blushing red. They laughed at his avowal, for his secret was also out among the officers.

"We'll hope so," said Lyndon. "But a single, bold, bad, robber-man. He is accountable for all the irregularities of the mail lately. If you ladies miss any letters, rest assured they will be found in his pockets — when he is taken. He is a bold fellow, if he is a road agent."

"Road agents generally are," said the Major, commenting from experience.

"Yes, and how gallant!" interjected Wallace, with enthusiasm. "If there happens to be a woman on the stage, which isn't often, she might be as old as Methuselah and correspondingly ugly, but he wouldn't touch her."

"Course not," assented the Major. "But how if she was young and pretty? That's what Mrs. Remmick is worrying about."

"Same thing, Major," cried the boy. "Her watch and her purse remain hers. That's the story they tell about him — a regular Claude Duval, or any of those past-masters."

"We must expect Wallace to admire a gallant bearing wherever he may find it," said Lyndon, as though in apology for the youngster. "He is at just that congratulatory stage in which he sheds his own chivalrous light on every one and every thing quite impartially." Wallace colored under the volley of light laughter this produced.

"I wouldn't talk if I were you, Captain," said Mrs. Remmick, warningly.

"I certainly have the right to talk," he ex-

postulated. "I am only an old bachelor, and have no expectations like his," indicating Wallace. "I'm as steady and reliable as any old married man; for instance, now, the Major here."

"Old? Me old? I'll swear I'm the most youthful fellow here, barring looks!" cried the Major, rousing himself. He shook his towsled head playfully, like a mildly assertive goat.

"When does the escort go out?" asked Mrs. Remmick, anxiously.

"To-night. Lawrence goes with it in command, and takes camp at the Colorado crossing, riding both ways with the stage from there to Redtown. That's the part the gentleman of the road infests. A sergeant will have another detail at the Ten Mile water-hole, and take it the rest of the way."

"I'm thankful," said Mrs. Remmick.

"When does your niece come?" asked Lyndon.

"We look for her in a couple of days, now. Coming so far, we are not quite sure what day she will arrive," she replied.

"I will speak to Lawrence before he goes out, and he will be looking after her at Red-

town, if he goes that far — as of course he will," Lyndon continued.

"I wish you would. That's very kind of you, Captain. And Mr. Lawrence — "

"Oh, he will be glad of the chance."

"Well, thank him for me in advance; or I may see him myself before he goes. I am glad it is Mr. Lawrence; I wouldn't have anything happen to Millicent for the world. Think of being in the stage when it is robbed! She would be frightened to death at the very idea!"

"You mean *you* would be, my dear," interposed the Major.

"No, sir; I am speaking of Millicent. She doesn't know the first thing about this southwestern country," she continued, turning to the group. "She is an artist, and spends her time between New York and Paris."

"Sort of amphibious, as it were," explained the Major, gravely.

"You ought to be ashamed to say such things about your niece, Major! Call her a mermaid, why don't you?" Mrs. Remmick said this in such a way that the Major felt complimented. "She is a lovely girl, and very talented. She has had pictures in the Exhibitions!"

"I hope she will stay with us a long time," said Mrs. Bates. "We do get *so* stupid out here, away from everything and everybody. I have not seen a picture since I was married." This was the new birth from which she dated her life. "I just *long* for some one to liven me up a little."

"I have no idea how long she will stay," said Mrs. Remmick; "but we are delighted at the idea of having her with us, and shall keep her as long as we may."

Later, when they were alone together, the Major approached his wife with a quizzical look.

"Why didn't you tell them Millicent would stay the usual length of time? I was tempted to. They would have understood."

"The usual length —" she repeated, wonderingly.

"Yes; stay till she gets married, of course. What else do girls visit isolated army posts for?"

"William! You incorrigible! I don't think Millicent would have to look far for a husband. When she wants one, there will be a plenty to choose from. She will have to spend no time in searching."

"You will never make these women here believe anything else of her visit," he declared.

"Why, Millicent is devoted to her art!"

"Exclusively?"

"Exclusively. You needn't shake your head! She doesn't think of anything else."

"She must be different from other girls," said he, skeptically.

"She is," declared Mrs. Remmick, enthusiastically.

"Now, you will never make me believe that," declared the Major.

Mrs. Remmick came very close to him. "You are every bit as much a boy as when I first knew you, and you had nothing there," said she, flatteringly, and putting a finger on the field of his shoulder-strap. "And now you are a big, pompous major!" She kissed him, presumably for the sake of the memory. "Now leave Millicent alone, and let her have a good time."

"I will," said he, in mock humility. "I hate to see people have a good time, but I'll agree to let her alone. It's the only way to keep peace in the family."

"Brute!" said she, laughing.

VI

THE west-bound express over the Texas and Pacific railroad makes a breakfast station of Redtown, and there is always a fine grouping of Texan color at the depot for the surprised admiration of the travellers. But it is not entirely for effect; the gathering is quite natural. The passing of the overland trains is an event, like the arrival of the circus; and the long line of cars, with rows of strange windowed faces, is a drawing card. The train is regarded with a sort of superior toleration; the faces of passengers are scanned curiously, for there is no telling whom one may not see in the breadth of travel; and there is not so much envy of these speeding voyagers as there is of a sentiment of superiority to them. They whirl along the leagues, but can know little of the country, for Texas is wide and the line of rails narrow; and the accustomed, acclimated ones who lounge about and view them have some of the spurning of hardy

pioneers for those who would come after them, reaping in peace and safety the fruit of their toil.

Millicent Harding descended from the sleeper at Redtown, with a clear sense of relief at the accomplishment of the rail stage of her journey. From New York to Redtown is so far that one has ample time, even on a limited express, to weary of the miles. And yet the transition had been accomplished so quickly that she was quite unable to adapt herself at once to her surroundings. To her it was all as new and strange as a different civilization; and it was not so very far from being this. It was not alone that the human beings about her were of a different type from anything she had before encountered, but that the very air she breathed was different. It came to her in its play over prairies of unknown extent, so strong, so virile, that it forced the lungs open and intruded itself in long, deep draughts. It bore into the heart a supreme sense of exaltation. Millicent had not been accustomed to think herself a poor, wretched thing of the walled-in city, but now she wondered with a secret joy at the change. It was so gratefully overpowering that for

the first moments she was oblivious to everything else. Then she became aware of the curious gaze of strangely dressed men, with a sense of annoyance. But in a moment that passed. They looked upon her as with the soft eyes of dumb animals. And as her practised glance took in colors and groupings, unstudied and picturesque, her first conscious thought was of a desire to whip out canvas and palette, and so to the picture before her. But all these accessories were in her baggage; and — this was eminently practical — the baggage must be looked after. That was for her to do, and quickly.

A Jewish-looking man in plaids crossed her path with a lingering, sidelong glance, as she walked down the platform towards the baggage cars. A brown, blanket-clad Indian stood like a post, and she made a considerable detour around him. A drunken man, red-faced and filthy, staggered towards her, feebly singing, and was suddenly collared out of sight by a tall, lithe cowboy in chaps, with a revolver and jingling spurs. A swarthy Mexican followed her with his eyes, silently soliciting her admiration, as he gracefully swung his brilliant blanket into new folds about his slender form.

And there were yet other travellers than herself, anxious about their baggage, — drummers from all the world, ranchmen returning from business trips, rolling stones out for pleasure only. The hissing of steam, the clatter of trucks, the rhythmical pounding of the dining-room gong, made a deafening din. People shouted at the tops of their voices, and even then were not heard. Millicent hesitated on the outer edge of the turmoil, dreading to take the plunge; and yet it had to be done. And just then she heard her name spoken.

"Pardon me if I am wrong, but is not this Miss Harding?"

A slender young man in a uniform of blue and white stood by her, and she looked into his face with a springing sense of relief.

"Oh yes."

"I am Mr. Lawrence, from the post. Major Remmick told me of your coming, and kindly commissioned me to do what I could for you. Now, if you will let me take you to the waiting-room — or will you have breakfast?"

"There was a buffet on the car, thanks —"

"That is better. I have eaten at Redtown — once. We will go to the waiting-room.

I'll take your checks, please. Everything else is quite arranged."

She gave them to him thankfully. "I am so glad! I really did not know what to do, it was so strange," she confessed weakly to him.

He was back again in a marvellously short time, and took her to the stage, which was ready for starting. "They don't waste much time on this stage line," he explained. "For one thing, they carry the mail, and so they have to hurry. It will seem slow to you, however, after your journey. I know, because I sometimes make the trip myself. But the stage gets through in a single day, and it's ninety miles. You can believe me, they attend strictly to business."

Lawrence opened the stage door, and looked in. "Back seat, if you please," he said civilly to some one. "Back seat for a lady."

The back seat was occupied by two men — one a ranchman known to Lawrence, the other the plaided Jew. The ranchman jumped up, but Lawrence put him back.

"No, not you, Mr. Porter," he said. "You had engaged your seat. This one here I want," and he turned to the Jew.

"But this is engaged too," said the occupant of it. "It is taken, occupied. Don't you see it is?"

Lawrence thrust his body within the stage, and for a moment there was the sound of his voice in quiet but convincing argument. From time to time Mr. Porter was heard assenting. Then Lawrence sprang out, smiling.

"Now, if you please," said he to Millicent.

"I don't want to take the man's seat," Millicent protested in a whisper. "I heard every word you said, and it was awful! I can ride backward just as well, or with the driver. I can't take his seat."

"It is your seat," said Lawrence, decidedly. "It had been engaged for you. Believe me, it was only a misunderstanding on the part of the fellow. He did not know the custom out here. It is your seat by every right."

"And what is this peculiar custom, Mr. Lawrence?" she asked, still unyielding.

"Just plain, common courtesy. That's all. You must get in. The stage waits." And to her surprise Millicent found herself taking the vacated back corner without further protest, and assisted thereto by a pair of strong arms.

"Mr. Porter, Miss Harding; niece of Major Remmick." Lawrence performed a hasty introduction. "All right!" he shouted to the driver aloft. A crack of the whip, a sudden careen on leathern rocking springs, and the stage rolled forward to the beginning of its ninety miles.

Without knowing it, Millicent smiled to herself out of real pleasure at her experience with Lawrence. Here was a young man, gentle and dignified, who did not consult her preference but assumed to judge for her, and who, with complete courtesy, compelled her to accede to his judgment. To be sure, she was in a strange land, one to which he was as a native; possibly he knew best. But such autocracy on an hour's acquaintance amused her. Since such a happening had not been hers before, she concluded it must be the army way. She was inclined to think there was something likable about it, but on this point she was not quite clear. It might be simply her satisfaction in having the most comfortable seat in the stage, for she could understand that she had. All the seats were occupied, and the ousted Jew faced her from the front. He looked unhappy as he jolted

back and forth with the motion of the steerage. He did not have the moral grace of his seatmate, who bumped along with philosophic unconcern. The Jew's acute misery affected her, and she determined to offer him her seat at the first stopping-place, out of sheer pity. Of course there would be towns and stopping-places every few miles.

She was the only woman passenger, but that gave her uneasiness on but a single score. If the men wanted to smoke, she knew she would never have the courage, thus unsupported, to say she objected. And there were cigars sticking out of their pockets. And tobacco-smoke was hateful to her. And then she caught the untainted breath of the new morning blowing through the windows, and the outside world claimed her attention. It eclipsed all other matters; it was worth her while.

The road was taking them over a gently rounded country, rich with short, green grass, and broken here and there in its smoothly swelling distances by bushy patches, much like transplanted sections of a forest's undergrowth. Coming nearer these, they were seen to be little groves of mesquite, hardly

to be dignified as trees. The thickets were sparse and thin, and among them were many cattle. Millicent was dimly conscious of the ranchman beside her saying to the man in front that cows were coming on well. This chance remark became to her as a part of the landscape. As they fled down slopes and rolled smoothly over the succeeding summits, she viewed a limitless plain, with everywhere cattle, cattle, feeding on the green grass. In that clear air one could see for miles, and far away dots and specks transformed themselves into more herds to please the ranchman's eye. They were the riches of the country, and the season was prosperous. Nowhere was there a sign of roof or habitation of man, and it gave her a feeling of awe, of sacrilege, to be thus boldly penetrating a land populated only by dumb beasts. The vastness, the uncontrolled extent, of these solitudes impressed her with a sense of human littleness and of her own unimportance in life. She wondered that her companions could speak of cattle and their money equivalents in such a place, at such a time. And then she reasoned that they were accustomed to it; it was an old story, and familiarity made

it common; they were no more impressed by it than she would be by miles of paved streets and vistas of blocks of high houses. But would it ever become an old story to her?

Occasionally they came upon brown patches, where the grass had been eaten away into the roots. Little mounds stood irregularly about these places, with small brown monuments atop. As they came yet closer, the monuments turned somersaults, and fell inside the mounds. This was very startling, until, upon arrival, the place resolved itself into a prairie-dog village. Each little brown fellow erected himself on top his habitation to view the stage's progress; and when it came within the zone of danger to himself, he incontinently dipped down into his burrow, and Millicent would see but the vanishing tip of a stumpy tail wagging derisively at her and all the world. There was the spirit of independence engendered by the plains, in these tiny creatures. A conceit took her that it was no more than the audacious impudence of unbirched schoolboys, and she laughed at the sight.

Mr. Porter looked out on his side. "Prairie-dogs," said he. "Ever see them before, Miss Harding?"

"Never," said she, quickly. "But I knew what they were the moment I saw them."

"Not to have seen them shows you are new to the country," he continued, doubtfully commiserating.

"I am, I shall have to admit," said she. "I don't like to, though, for I can understand it is little to my credit. How you people must pity us poor Easterners!"

"We like to have you get out here and see what freedom of life really is; and being a 'tenderfoot,' as the term goes, isn't so bad. It is like the freshman year at college — a necessary prelude to the good things to come."

"Ah! you know, then, —"

"Yes; I'm Yale — a number of years back, however," he added, in extenuation of his weatherworn appearance.

"I beg your pardon," said Millicent, biting her lip in mortification at being caught sitting in hasty judgment; "I might have known."

"I don't see how, unless you are a seeress," he laughed at her. "The visible varnish and gilding rub off pretty quickly when one does really begin to live."

Mr. Porter's companion on the front seat

leaned forward with the impressive manner of one with information to impart. "Talkin' of prairie-dogs and tenderfeet," said he, "I've seed a dog, a tenderfoot dog, chase them little fellers all day under the idee that he mought ketch one of them. He was a hunter dog from the East, and he was a-showin' off; ary yeller dog in Texas would have knowed better. Of co'se he nuvver ketched one, and you nuvver see so surprised a critter as he'd be w'en he'd sneak on a burrow and jes' see the tip o' the tail going down. He run all day till he nachelly wore his footses out, and had to be tuk up and carried. And that's why they calls 'em 'tenderfeet' now." He sat back gravely and spat out of the window.

"Mr. Veck," said Mr. Porter, by way of necessary introduction, "and one of the best men on the ranch. You are going to the fort?"

"Yes; I am to visit my uncle, Major Remmick," replied Millicent, still laughing at Veck's explanation of a common term.

"Ah, I know the Major. A good man every way. Will you kindly give him my regards? Mr. Porter of the Cross-bar ranch."

Millicent felt a thrill of pride at hearing

such ready praise of her uncle, and gladly promised.

Just without the town they had passed a military detail beside the road. There had been four armed soldiers on a buckboard. Now, looking back around a turn, Millicent saw that they were following the stage at a little distance behind its dust. And just then Mr. Lawrence, mounted on a white horse, rode up from some unseen place, and called out cheerily:

"Well! All right inside?"

Millicent looked out at him in some surprise. "I thought we had left you miles behind!" she cried.

"Me? Oh no. Can't be shaken off so easily as that. You are being highly honored, Miss Harding — military escort, mounted, and solely on your account."

"How nice of you!" said she, not quite understanding him. In her dark civilianism she could not separate the grain of his remark from the chaff. "Why isn't there a brass band? Can't I have one?"

"Wait till you get to the post. You shall have all you want, and even more, if you are easily satisfied."

He turned his horse's head, and galloped away from the stage to a little rise of land. Millicent learned from Mr. Porter, as she watched his course, that this was an escort sent to protect mails and passengers from highwaymen. There had been many robberies of late, and this was Colonel Bruff's way of putting a stop to them. The armed men on the buckboard were there for business, not for show.

"And Mr. Lawrence?" she asked.

"I suppose he is in command of the detachment. They are in camp at the crossing of the Colorado. It will be no picnic for him, either, but plain, steady, hard riding and watchfulness until he is relieved."

Millicent looked out to see him swooping from summit to summit, outlined on his white horse against the pale blue sky. He rode erect, and with such ease that he seemed like a part of the horse. Long practice had taught him to accomplish great distances with the minimum of fatigue to both horse and rider. There was none of the play and affectation of many school-horsemen about him, and Millicent smiled to think how incongruous such a rider would appear in that

setting. Yet Lawrence had been trained in as severe a school as any.

"How well he rides!" was her involuntary comment.

"He does," said Mr. Porter, readily. "West Point does that, if nothing more, for the army officers. They do know what horses are for, and that is important knowledge out here. Mr. Lawrence rides quite like a cowboy. Here comes one now; look at him."

A speck was rising and falling across the plain and coming nearer. Millicent could not have told at that distance what it was, but to the practised eye of Mr. Porter the motion was sufficient information. A distant cowboy was riding to intercept the stage and get the mail for some ranch hidden from view. As he came nearer, Millicent beheld him with amazement.

"Why, he hasn't the reins at all!" she exclaimed.

"No," said Mr. Porter, with smiling appreciation; "he is guiding the pony entirely with his legs now. His hands are busy rolling a cigarette of loose, dry tobacco in a cornhusk. Now he strikes a match and gets

a light. It is quite a feat, Miss Harding, when a breeze is blowing. To tell you the truth, I doubt if Mr. Lawrence could do it."

The cowboy rode up, took what was given him, and was away without a word to any one. He rose and fell rhythmically till he became a dark speck, and finally faded from sight in the midst of the living green. Millicent was an accomplished horsewoman and had seen exhibitions by good riders, but she had never beheld so finished a style of riding as he displayed. She turned to Mr. Porter with a face expressive of admiration.

"There is a type. That is the result of the plains school of riding," said Mr. Porter, with quiet pride.

A table-topped elevation, called by courtesy a mountain, had been menacing their progress for an hour, and now they drew up under its brow. The stage ranch was at that place, and they stopped for dinner.

A family was living in the stage house, and Millicent was made free of their rooms. Presently, as she looked out, she saw Lawrence ride up, and after the dinner they walked about together while waiting for the afternoon's start.

"I was thinking how inexpressibly lonely the life of those people must be," said she, indicating the house. "Here is a man, his wife and daughter, dropped down in this forlorn spot by apparent chance. What can they find to do here all day long, and day after day?"

"That has always been a question with me, and I never liked to ask them to answer it," said Lawrence. "I happened to learn something of their history one day — for people in a monotone have histories as well as other people."

"I know they do," assented Millicent. "What is theirs?"

"It seems they were well-to-do somewhere in the East. I can't locate them any more definitely than that. He — the old man — got to drinking, and everything went by the board. It must have been horrible for the wife," he said, agreeing with Millicent's exclamation of pity. "After everything was gone, he swore off; and after various attempts to reform, and the same number of failures, he turned up out here with his family, and went to keeping stage ranch. He is pretty well out of the way of temptation here, and

that is what he needs. I understand he keeps very straight."

"I am glad of that, and if it ended there, no one should complain. But it is not for himself alone — "

"No; there's his wife and the girl," said Lawrence. "I do hate to see women sacrificing themselves for the sake of one weak man, — and yet that is what it amounts to in this case; otherwise, they would not be with him, I suppose. No; I never asked them what they did to kill time; somehow, I never wanted to."

"I don't think I would care to, either," said Millicent, softly. Then, "Oh, these little glimpses of others' lives! How pathetic they are! Why is it so?"

"Why? We are what other people make us, I reckon. We are not really responsible. I know my Uncle Sam is responsible for me as I am. But I am not altogether pathetic, am I? Would you wring any hands over me?"

"Not you," she declared. "You are lucky — perhaps. But I am sorry for that girl in there."

"Possibly she gets some good out of life," suggested Lawrence, cheerfully.

"She has a guitar and a melodeon," said Millicent, as though enumerating blessings, "and a kerosene lamp with a green paper shade."

"That sheds a little brighter light on the subject," declared Lawrence. "Her life is not all pathos. You've no idea how good a little music is out here, or how far we can make a little of it go. I happened upon a ranch once where they had just got an organette, and I assure you we sat up the best part of the night, turning the crank and making up our minds which tune went best. The vote, I remember, was in favor of 'Flow Gently, Sweet Afton' — the sound of running water in a desert land. At the ranch there was nothing but a mudhole, by courtesy a spring."

"And people lived *there?*" she cried in amazement.

"Not only that, but liked it. It's all in getting used to a place, Miss Harding. I suspect this place seemed awfully lonesome and dreary to these people when they first came, but I'll warrant they like it well enough now. They form ties and associations. Now, if the melodeon is all they have, they get just as much satisfaction out of it as a town family

would from a grand piano. It has no competition. Don't you believe it?" he asked, seeing her thoughtful face.

"I — suppose so. I was thinking it would take years to get used to the life. And what will become of her, anyway?"

"The girl? Believe me, her future is already settled, and very satisfactorily. The guitar explains that. It is a native of the section; they never brought it with them."

"You mean —"

"Lover — American or Mexican cowboy — white moonlight — strummed tunes — and a gallop to town for a wedding. Same thing as in the East, Miss Harding, so far as the theory goes; a trifle more primitive in practice, but producing the same result."

His horse was brought up to him just then, and he laughed at his statement of the case, while he looked at the bridle and tested the cinching of the saddle. The stage clattered to the door with fresh horses, ready for the afternoon run.

"That is very pretty," said she, as though half offended. "It may be better for her, but I am not obliged to you for spoiling all my

long fancies about her. I was quite ready to make some great sacrifice for her benefit, — perhaps I might have consulted you about it, — but you make it appear that she wants no sacrifice, and would appreciate none; that she is quite contented. Well, perhaps you are right. No doubt a cowboy who can ride and roll cigarettes, and plays the guitar, is a sufficient factor to make her forget others that are lacking. We will hope so, since that is the best we can hope — for her."

"We don't need to hope it; we may know it. I spoke with authority," said he.

"As usual!" she flashed at him, as he helped her up to the exalted seat beside the driver; for the day was fair, and she had elected to see this wonderful land more broadly than was possible from the stage window; and she nodded smilingly down at him from her perch as the stage rolled away.

"Pretty girl! Friend o' yourn?" inquired the ranch-keeper. Lawrence did not hear him. He was following the receding stage with his eyes, and he swung himself into the saddle mechanically. "Come on!" he beckoned to the waiting escort. The ranchman

coughed knowingly behind his hand. A young man and woman, who had witnessed the departure from the doorway, looked at each other, nodded in happy significance, and smiled.

VII

To a girl reared as Millicent had been, in a delicate Eastern environment, and now tasting for the first time the broader joys of untrammelled nature, the ride on the box could not fail to be joyfully exciting. The road wound about the bases of a few tabled hills, and then broke forth again upon the plain. She could trace its hard, white length shimmering ahead to a needle's point. The horses padded hard to the front, and they bowled along merrily.

The country was a flat expanse in shaded browns and greens, bending gracefully away and upward to meet the descending hem of the heavens. That horizon was faint and mysterious; its ethereal dimness led to doubts of its existence; and the eye wondered at its own extended power of vision. Cattle browsed placidly in the distances; and once a herd of pretty white-and-fawn-marked creatures dashed close to the stage, and

then held away on a wide curve. There were shouts and exclamations from the passengers, bemoaning the absence of guns; for these were antelope, and fair game for any hunter. It mattered not that no use could be made of the game; it was alive and wild, and therefore to be shot. The driver looked back and gesticulated wildly to the military escort that was trailing after, but they held their fire for other purposes. Birds circled above the plain continually, calling to one another. Closer to the surface, brilliant butterflies fluttered about, and fanned themselves above their reflections in shallow, crystal pools. Clumps of vivid color here and there showed the cactus in bloom. It was a country of vastness, yet lacking in no feature for variety.

Even the driver, whose face was lozenged by sun and wind into a resemblance to the leather curtains that flapped on the stage, loved the sight. He pointed around the compass with his whip, embracing the universe in his delight.

"This is what I *like*," said he on a venture to the pretty girl beside him; for he would not be considered wanting in the courteous

attention due a traveller. "This *is* a landscape. You c'n see and see into the edge of heaven an' the next county. You ain't shet in by mountins, nor nuthin'." He did not venture to look at Millicent as he spoke, but delivered his remarks over the backs of his horses.

"It is lovely!" declared Millicent, with girlish enthusiasm, "and not monotonous in the least."

"Well, now, there *is* them that like mountins, and say this is monotonous. But I don't see anything in hills. They bind you in, and fall over on ye. You can't see beyond them. They wall ye about unpleasant. I nuvver git tired of a long sight about me, and the wind blowing free, from clear beyond my sight. It's my natur, I reckon, and I love it."

The ice being broken, he became communicative, and entertained Millicent with an account of the robbery of the stage. It had been on his partner's runs, not his. The "hold ups" had taken place in the hills they had passed, and there was no chance of trouble the rest of the way. And he reckoned they wouldn't tackle the stage while

they was soldiers along, anyway. There would be shooting both ways then, and that wasn't exactly their idea.

Then he confided to Millicent that he had soldiered it before he took to driving. Leftenant Lawrence he declared to be a nervy man, and one of whom the road agents stood in awe. He had served with the Leftenant, and knew what he was talking about. He went the length of saying that the Leftenant had as soon fight as eat, and would sooner shoot than run. You wouldn't think it to talk with him, for he was mild and gentle as one of the horses it became necessary just then to touch up with the whip. And now, to see him gallopin' ahead down the road on that white horse of his — it was most as good as being a soldier agin himself! Get up, there! Stage horses were lumbering things at the best.

"A soldier's life must be full of excitement," said Millicent, lamely. She saw he was touched by the recollection; but it was beyond her experience, and she did not know what to say.

"Excitin' enough in a way. But it ain't so much *that;* it's the sense of being with

your *kind*," said the driver, introspectively. "It's the feeling o' standin' by somebody, and somebody standin' by you. It's like brothers, only more so. Yis, if I had a brother, I'd rather have a soldier for a brother than any man I know of. 'Most any *real* soldier'd do." He whipped up the horses again, as though the memories were too tender to be indulged in while live issues were at stake.

As the afternoon advanced, a subdued roaring began to make itself heard. Its origin lay at no definite point, but seemed to be all along the line of the horizon to their front. At intervals in their progress it swelled and increased until the air quivered with the volume of the sound. It seemed unexplainable, and Millicent began to be apprehensive, and looked questioningly at the driver.

"That's the Colorado," he explained as he noticed her perturbation. "She'll have been getting a boom; some cloudburst up-country, I reckon. She's as mean, tricky a little river as I ever see; one day jes' a-crawling among the stones, and the next tearin' along, bank full."

"Do you think the bridge will be gone?" queried Millicent, anxiously.

"No, I guess that will be all right," said he. Then he found it necessary to look away before he could proceed with his reply. "I say the bridge will be all right, because there ain't a bridge. I don't reckon there's one in the county; least, I nuvver heard of one. We'll jes' ford it, if we can. I've known parties to camp for days on the edge of the river, waiting for the water to go down, but I don't really think it is that bad this time."

When they arrived at the crossing, it was a yellow, troubled stream that flowed before them. It was not wide, but fearsome from its unknown depth. The ceaseless roaring thrilled them, and the clots of foam gave it a menacing appearance. The water swirled by angrily, laden with drift from the assailed up-country. Sometimes it was only logs, or matted débris, and again it would be the body of some animal, showing that the rise had been very sudden. Up and down, the banks barely confined the yellow flood, and an ominous noise as of boulders grinding together in the bed of the stream was given forth. To Millicent it looked about as bad as could be, and the passengers in the body of the stage spoke of it in tones of dismay.

The driver pulled up and looked at the ford with a critical eye. Lawrence had paused at the very brink, and his white horse stood with his fore legs braced, as though in refusal to advance. Lawrence looked over his shoulder at the driver, pointed ahead, and nodded.

"Can we make it, Leftenant?" shouted the driver.

Lawrence shouted something in reply, but it was inaudible. The driver perceived his intent, however.

"He's going to try it," said he.

Lawrence pressed the spurs to his horse, but the animal refused to enter the water. He trembled in his antagonism to his rider's will. He reared and shook his head in dumb protest. Fear had possession of him.

"Oh, don't!" called Millicent, timidly.

"He'll do it, Miss. Keep ca'm," cautioned the driver. And Millicent gripped the iron handles beside her and put a guard on her voice.

Lawrence spent a few moments considerately in calming his horse. He withdrew a few paces from the water and patted him gently. Then he moved forward again and

with relentless determination drove him into the water, urging him with voice and spur. They then went forward bravely. The water rose mid-leg and body high and pressed strongly. It foamed and roared in rage. It would bear horse and rider under. So would it triumph, dashing high and rolling resistlessly on. Twice the horse lost his footing, and twice his rider turned his head to the mad current, keeping him to the only chance of safety. Then he struck the firm bottom in shallowing water and scrambled up the opposite bank, streaming and trembling. Millicent had witnessed the battle from between her fingers across her eyes.

"We c'n make it," announced the driver, authoritatively, gathering up the lines. "The stage's heavy; only keep the hosses on the ford —"

He hesitated, for Lawrence was recrossing. His judgment was with the driver's; the crossing was practicable, but he recommended a degree more of caution. A line was carried across to aid in keeping the horses' heads up stream; and then the stage rolled into and through the flood. It tipped, and jolted, and careened. The inside passengers were wet,

and thought themselves about to be drowned like rats in a trap. But the passage was safely accomplished, and they congratulated themselves on their deliverance from a great hazard. But the deed passed without special comment by the chief actors. The driver looked back once, and nodded his satisfaction. Lawrence waved a good-by, and rode away to his camp. The stage hastened on to the supper station, and then, through the gloom of the sudden southern nightfall, twenty miles more, the miles shortening as they sped from under foot, to the post, and the quarters of Major Remmick. And there was a warm welcome for Millicent, and a fitting close to her long journey. The rail portion of it she looked upon as commonplace; but the stage ride had impressed her, not alone by its novelty, and she gave a strong account of it.

"You should have seen Mr. Lawrence fording that river, as I did," she declared. "He was fearlessness itself — in blue — on that plunging white horse in the yellow water. It was foolhardy, I thought. I shut my eyes, for I didn't *dare* to look; and I opened them again, for I didn't dare not to see. But he

knew what he was about. Oh dear, how green I must have appeared! But you ought to have seen him!"

"We know him well, and none of us will question his courage or his ability," said the Major, beaming.

"No indeed! I had confidence in him. I felt that if he said we could get across, there would be no danger, and I wasn't afraid — not *very* much. But he was so picturesque! I am glad I saw that crossing. I should love to paint it." She was silent, in keen mental appreciation of the color effect, and the literary value of such a picture.

And when she went to bed presently, it was with a confused brain-mingling of white, brown, blue, and yellow schemes, till a rattle of drums and a shrieking of fifes aroused her to a new day — a day as regulated by military authority.

VIII

THERE was a jovial, rollicking twist to the fifes, and the rumbling drums had nothing threatening in them as the field music paraded the edges of garrison, playing the reveille music. It was sparkling, alluring, and a pretty measure for those unaccustomed to it. Army women have sometimes complained that it breaks in upon their slumbers, and army men frequently assert that it comes too early. But Miss Harding, with but a short night's rest separating her from a long and tedious journey, and by no stretch of the imagination ever to be accounted an early riser, slipped from her couch and peeped out of the window to observe what this first military-musical wonder might be.

The grayness of unwilling dawn was upon the earth; for reveille summons the sun, and he came under protest. But even as the music ceased, he shot a level, answering ray of light across the eastern prairie. It fell

upon a group of men at the foot of the flag-staff, who were engaged in raising the colors, and it followed the red, white, and blue up the slim staff till it rested in glory at the top. Little parties of soldiers stood in line on the far side of a level rectangle upon which she looked, and returned crisp shouts as the roll of names was called. The result of roll-call was transmitted swiftly with much waving of arms to a lone man standing at the centre of the rectangle; and then the swarms of men dispersed, and the place was as empty as before. Miss Harding had to admit to herself that reveille was but a brief business, with a very short-lived excitement; and as there seemed to be no immediate succeeding spectacle, she had nothing for it but a return to bed.

As the morning wore on, the garrison took on a more lively air. The general guard and police duty proceeded without jar or hindrance. Little parties of garrison prisoners, each with an escorting sentinel, came along the kitchen wall and cut a day's supply of stove wood for the officers. Front doors were thrown open, and there was a preliminary garnishing in every house up and down

the Line. And at uncertain intervals a smartly officious personage came from the adjutant's office and blew various blasts on the bugle, summoning successive sections of men to some military duty. The housemaids laughed at the unhappy prisoners. The cavalry horses were herded off for the day with a great dust and a prodigious clatter of hoofs. A specially reliable soldier drove behind a mule, equally reliable, to each kitchen door, and received from the heads of households directions for the day's marketing in the little town. The market and the grocery were the only places to be visited, and the soldier punctiliously set down his orders in a little book. And then the bugler, bursting with his responsibilities, came forth and blew mess-call. This signal was generally agreed upon as a summons to breakfast, and all over the post there was a prompt gathering at tables.

At the bachelors' mess it was gladly announced that the Major's niece had arrived. None had seen her, but it was beyond question that the stage had driven in and stopped at the Major's door. That could mean but one thing; for no one else was expected, and

people did not visit remote army posts without giving due warning of their coming. The bachelors made an arrangement to call upon her in a body that evening.

"'In union is strength,'" quoted Thompson, laughing. "We will make a reconnoissance in force, and then, if advisable, attack in echelon — or any other way." Thompson was old and gray, and walked with a cane. He had been upon the verge of a captaincy for years, and hope deferred, the juniors asserted, had made his heart sour. Yet he was an excellent quartermaster, always ready to furnish rude household appliances to the best of the government's ability, and quite willing to sacrifice mules and ambulances in the good cause of a garrison merrymaking and picnic.

"She's a very pretty girl," remarked Wallace, thoughtfully.

"There! The youngster has beaten us all out again," cried Thompson, in mock dismay. "When did you see her? Did you sit up last night, or get up this morning? You are an enterprising chap, anyway."

"Haven't seen her at all," said Wallace, stoutly defending himself. "If you want to

know, there's a photo of her on Mrs. Remmick's mantel, and you've seen it yourself a dozen times. The only trouble with you is that you don't know a good thing when you see it."

"I'll know an application for an ambulance next time you put one in," returned Thompson, with a menace of refusal. Then he speedily changed to a wheedling tone. "What does she look like? Come, now, Wallace, speaking as a man of observation, what can you say of her looks?" He appeared eagerly interested.

Wallace thoughtfully filliped a morsel of bread at his dog, standing on guard, looking out for tid-bits. He caught and swallowed it at a gulp, and asked for more. "Well — face, oval; features, regular; blonde; classic lips; light hair, and plenty of it; eyebrows straight — "

"That will do! Don't say another word, or I won't promise to wait for evening," interrupted Thompson, in simulation of youthful passion. "You seem to have studied her photograph to some purpose — and you can have that ambulance."

"You forget Wallace has had lots of expe-

rience," interposed Lyndon. "You and I are not in the same class with him. Don't you go running after strange gods — and goddesses, you young What's-his-name," he added to Wallace, vainly trying to remember the name of some fabled favorite of women.

"No danger. I'm so enmeshed that I can't move. You fellows can have the field," said he, candidly.

"Wallace deals in fair words, but I wouldn't trust him in such a case," said Miller. "You know even the steadiest old family horse will keep in the road only so long as he wears blinders; take them off so he can see all around, and he is forever trying to get at the forbidden fruit on the sides."

"That's so!" shouted the officers, in jovial chorus. "Keep your blinders on, Wallace. Look straight ahead. No more dallying by the wayside for you." They covered the boy with confusion. His cheeks burned. But he knew it was a part of his fate as a prospectively married man to endure such chaffing; and he contented himself with declaring that they would not have so much to say if they did not really envy him his happy state.

It was a day of continuous reception for Millicent. At short intervals light footsteps would be heard on the porch, and then a face would appear at the door with the appealing query, "*May* I come in?" Before nightfall nearly all the ladies in garrison had thus informally made Millicent's acquaintance. Some of them made excuse of an errand to Mrs. Remmick; but most of them declared that their sole purpose in running in was to see Miss Harding, and to give her immediate and hearty welcome to the midst of the army. There was a spontaneous quality to this movement of theirs and to their words that left no doubt of genuineness. They made her free of their hearts and their hearthstones, and yet with that indefinable atmosphere of exclusiveness that marked her for an approved guest. Not every one coming to the post would have been granted such a reception as this; not every one would have been gladdened by any general recognition. For if army men are jealous of their prerogatives and given to clannishness, army women possess the same sentiment of their optimacy in a superlative degree. And one whom they do take by the hand and cause to feel at home is favored among ten thousand.

In the evening there was a general movement of the officers to the Major's quarters, and many of the ladies who had been in during the day came again, convoying their husbands. Mrs. Bruff had been one of the earliest callers, and this may have had some influence upon the actions of the others; for it is beyond question that the wife of the commanding officer can do no wrong; and the attitude taken by her on any matter is bound to be copied to a considerable extent by the junior ladies. She came again in the evening, though without her husband — a fact that she deplored as she explained that it was almost impossible to get him away from his newspaper if the stage happened to be in, and that he was devoted to solitaire. But she stood as his accredited representative, to say nothing of her own quality; so no shadow was cast on the informal pleasure of the evening.

Mrs. Remmick was highly gratified with the response made by the garrison, and the Major's broad face beamed from red to purple upon every one. It was quite understood that this was not an occasion of actual introduction under official auspices; there would

be a social function later on the accepted plan of such events, to which all the garrison and such other nobility as might be found, would be bidden. Meanwhile, as a prelude, the evening was a remarkable success.

Millicent herself moved about in a state of brilliant excitement. Her eyes shone, and her pleasing color, instead of doubtfully wavering, was fixed in her cheeks. It was a novel experience to find herself in a room-ful from which civilian attire was excluded. Every man was clad more or less bravely in blue and yellow and white. It was not strange that they should gather about her; she was accustomed to the talk of men from her artistic Bohemia through her successive lights of social life. It was the fact that their attire outshone that of the women; that they were not embarrassed by it; that they were, without exception, of fine bearing; that their eyes had a fearless habit of looking straight at the point of observation; that all were to-night making a little army Bohemia for her — it was this that gave piquancy to her entertainment. She was young and pretty, with a fixed habit of enjoying her life as she found it whatever; but her

new surroundings gave it an added zest that night.

In the movements of the guests she found herself cut off and hemmed in by a laughing group of young officers. They were telling wonderful stories of the country, a *terra incognita* to her, and expecting her to believe them. It began when she told them some incidents of the stage ride, and of the high water of the Colorado. She gave a lively account, in which Lawrence was not mentioned.

"That was a narrow escape," said Miller, gravely, as she finished. "I suppose, from the fact of your reaching dry land in safety, that you were not attacked by water-animals?"

"I didn't see any, I'm sure," said Millicent, beginning to believe that dangers had been concealed from her. "What are they like?"

"I have never seen one, and can give you no good description. The name of the worst kind is 'Gila monster.' He is something to steer clear of, if half they say is true."

Millicent delighted the group by shuddering at his statement.

"And did you see no tarantulas on the

way?" he inquired. He disguised the word by placing the accent on the penultimate, and chuckled at her mystified expression.

"Taran tulas?" she queried. "Oh, I suppose you mean robbers? Of course we did not, when we had soldiers with us."

"No, not human robbers, but beasts of the plain," he explained, kindly. "They lie in wait by the roadside, spring upon the horses, kill them with a bite, and then lunch off them. They thus put passengers to great inconvenience, but they never are known to attack them."

"Really? Oh, don't think me so credulous," she laughed, in pretty doubt. "Do you really have such horrid creatures? I know they say such things about Texas — "

"You are not to believe 'such things' unless they come on excellent authority — as substantial as Mr. Miller here," said Wallace. "The only animals that soldiers fear in these parts are the soldier rabbits. You may have seen some at a distance? No? They are powerful and fleet. They make nothing of taking a full-grown man over their shoulders and galloping away with him to their lair. They prefer soldiers, — some-

thing attractive about the uniform, — and hence the name."

Millicent sat in silent amazement as Wallace spun this story with a straight face.

"That particular kind of animal I was speaking of, Miss Harding, the taran tula, is almost extinct here now. But we have a smaller kind, — the species seems to have degenerated into a sort of spider, — and you can see their holes in the parade ground by thousands. The garrison boys amuse themselves by catching them and putting them under a glass, in company with a couple of red ants, to fight. That is the only form in which duelling survives with us, and that is one-sided. The ants win every time," said Miller, regretfully.

"I shan't dare to step on the parade ground, for fear of them," Millicent declared. "And I don't think much of your manner of amusements. You are cruel."

"Ah, but you should see the boys go hunting for them," continued Miller, with calm conviction. "It is as pretty a sight as you could ask for. You will let me take you out some day to witness it? There is no bloodshed, no firing of guns. They take a string

with a bit of wax at the end, and dangle it up and down in the reptile's hole till he gets mad and bites into it. Then his fangs stick in the wax, he is harmless, and he is drawn out wriggling, to do battle with the ants."

Millicent looked to Wallace for confirmation of this wonderful tale. He nodded his head at her solemnly.

"I don't believe your story!" said she, suddenly. "How do you get them away from the wax without being bitten? Ah, I have you there!"

Wallace looked at Miller, puzzled, but that gentleman was equal to the occasion.

"We pry the fangs apart," said he, "with a bayonet, or a broom-stick, or anything handy — "

"What's all the fun about?" demanded the Major and Lyndon, attracted by the laughter that greeted Miller's explanation. "What's the matter, Miss Harding?" said Lyndon. "I see. These boys have been treating you to Texas stories. They keep a stock on hand ready for all comers. Don't put any faith in them or their stories either. As the phrase goes, they are giving you a 'fill.'"

"Oh, I know it!" laughed the girl. "I'm

sure of it. They have no mercy on a — a — tenderfoot? Yes, tenderfoot. Uncle, I shall appeal to you for protection."

"And you shall have it!" The old warrior fell into an attitude fit for personified heroism. "Beware!" he breathed at the young fellows. "Be on your guard! I am not here for trifling."

Everybody laughed, some out of kindly consideration for the Major's humorous failing. And Millicent implored:

"Oh, uncle, if you would *only* let me paint you like that! It would make my reputation forever!"

"Yes, and spoil mine," said he, subsiding.

After that there came a lull in the chatter, and nearly all the guests took advantage of it to say good-night.

"Well!" said Millicent when the last one was gone. "I am surprised at two things."

"What are they, my dear?" asked the Major, prepared to hear something nice about the army.

"Nobody talked weather, and only one asked me what I thought of the army. What self-restraint that was!"

"I suppose so," said the Major, doubtfully,

hardly knowing whether or not to consider the army complimented. "But what do you think of us — the officers, I mean? the women are another question."

"Yes — I should hope so," she laughed saucily. "I like them in a way — the officers. There's nothing slow about them."

"My dear," suggested Mrs. Remmick, to whom the popular freedom of phrases was distasteful, "is that a good manner of expression?"

"Why, it *is* expressive, isn't it?" asked Millicent, innocently. "And they are *not* slow. I looked at them, and somehow thought of poor Dicky Swope." And here she laughed again.

"And who is this *Mr.* Swope?" her aunt inquired with a touch of primness.

"He was in Paris when we were there," she went on. "We were four girls together, you know, and we had our little *salon*, and we did things in some *style*, I tell you! Then it came Christmas time, and we fixed up the place with greens, and put some mistletoe on the chandelier — "

"Why, Millicent, do you think that was a very nice thing to have — you four girls

alone?" asked Mrs. Remmick, really alarmed for the proprieties.

"Never mind, dear aunt; that is just what we *did* have," replied Millicent, with animated decision. "We put it there, — you could only just see it if you knew it was there, — and Dicky Swope used to come in. He was a good boy, and would do anything in the world for us; his father was a Methodist minister in Kansas somewhere. But he was so *slow!* He would throw himself into a chair as though tired to *death;* and one of the girls would stand under the chandelier—"

"Which one?" demanded the Major, roguishly.

"Not this one, uncle, really; and only for Dicky at that. She would stand there and fold her hands, and look up at it as though she was just *languishing!* And we would all be on the point of *screaming* to see her so audacious! And poor Dicky would sit there — well, he didn't know a good thing when he saw it. You should have been there!"

"I think so," said Mrs. Remmick, incisively.

"But you wouldn't think of playing such tricks on these boys here, eh?" said the Major, in some pride.

"Um — they may be a little isolated, but they know a thing or two, I fear. No, it wouldn't be safe with them."

"There's lots of mistletoe grows round here, if you care to risk it," he pursued.

"Oh, bring it in," said she, falling into his vein and determined to appear even more radical than he. "Bring in a bushel! Hang it over the door! Put out a sign, 'Kisses within; price reduced for large lots.' Have a clearance sale!"

"Admirable!" declared the Major.

"Horrible!" exclaimed Mrs. Remmick, scandalized by the thought.

"Oh, you dear aunt," cried Millicent, running to her. "They would all be for uncle and you — for you anyway — and for uncle if he let me paint him!"

"So that's the penalty, is it?" said the Major.

"Which?" asked Millicent, loftily.

"The prize, the reward, I mean," said he, correcting himself. "Please excuse me."

"Yes, that is it," said she.

"I will consider it," said he, saluting her. "Good night."

IX

The warmly hospitable greeting extended to Millicent by all in the garrison acted as a spur upon Mrs. Remmick in the matter of the state function. She had intended to do something handsome, but now she gave herself almost entirely to planning for the event. It was due in a measure to the garrison, as an acknowledgment of their cordiality; it was plainly due Millicent, as being her niece, and a person of considerable social distinction; it was due herself, as hostess, that the affair should be creditable to her; and it was a matter of primary acknowledgment that it was due the whole army in general, and the Old Regiment in particular, that no effort should be spared to add to the entertainment's brilliancy. Time, labor, and expense were for consideration only as they contributed to this result. For Millicent was then for the first time to see the army on its best behavior; and there were a certain few civilians in the

little town and on neighboring ranches who had been accustomed to the wearing of dress coats in the East, and who were always to be impressed with the lavishness and magnificence of army entertainments. Moreover, Mrs. Remmick had a warm heart for her niece, rejoiced in her pleasure, and delighted to contribute to it; and this may easily have been quite as important a factor in the matter as any other.

Women who love to do for others are always lovable in themselves. This is not necessarily or probably a quality of form, fashion, or manner, but of the soul; and the possessor of that soul, in its highest development, must be well known to be appreciated. It is a quality of unusual frequency among army women, and yet the casual acquaintance would be very shrewd to suspect it. For, in their everyday life, they are so hedged about by narrow limitations that little opportunity for the open exercise of this element occurs. Conditions are unfavorable; there is frequent isolation in dismal camps and remote garrisons, where the preferences of life must make way for the homely necessities of living. But this refinement of the soul, in women,

doth feed and strengthen upon itself, so that the sudden demands for sacrifice that accompany the army life are never unsatisfied. They have their unrequited share in the labor and perils of the army. Reliance upon them is seldom in vain. Not unfrequently have they sounded the keynote for tests of the heroic capabilities of the men. They have the one or two sublime flights of constancy and courage that may come in a lifetime; but beyond, and on all sides of these, stretches the daily round of existence in waste places where nature is sullen; the killing monotony of unheard-of camps; difficulty after difficulty subdued and not spoken of. The army woman has true heroism in small affairs, and it is here that she does mostly shine by her own unconscious virtue; and here, perhaps, she reaches altitudes of self-sacrifice undreamed of, save by the few initiated companions of her exile.

The husbands and fathers of these women understand them in so far as with man's baser intelligence they may, and they show a lively appreciation — generally. Like other men, they have loud faults; and one is that, with innate masculine stupidity, they occasionally

fall short in the measure of regard and dutiful respect. They have been known to lay at the doors of their women's tongues, gossip and scandal-causing circumstances that might have found abiding-places nearer home. But the mainspring of their bearing is a true chivalrous defence against all outsiders. They may say things about army women, but civilians had better beware of meddling! And when it comes to personal courtesy and attention in numberless ways, the army men are unsurpassable. Taken through, one may say they do their best according to their light; and if some stumble in darkness, the fault is less general than individual. And it is consoling to reflect that Christian civilization has several lengthy strides yet to take before the ideal plane shall be reached. The code of these officers entitles them to a place in the front rank of progress.

Wallace had a section of the code served to him a day or two after the announcement of the coming event had been made. No invitations were issued in garrison, it being a garrison affair at which all felt bound to appear. Some were sent outside. Willard, the adjutant, strolled into Wallace's quarters

after morning drill, when he would be sure of finding him in, and commenced chatting of the affair.

"I suppose of course you will escort some one?" he said at a stroke.

Now, that was a question Wallace had been asking himself. Being measurably unversed in the ways of life, and so believing himself of as large importance in the world as he was in the eyes of a single laughing girl somewhere back East, he aspired to all the honors he could carry. And more. He had a strong wish to escort some one, the some one to be Miss Harding. He was smitten with her in a harmless way, she being a generous girl and privately posted as to his matrimonial expectations, and he desired to show her every possible favor. Thus it was that he had jumped at the thought of being her escort. But he did not jump at an opportunity to gain her consent. Some instinct moved within him to tell him that it would be an unwise measure; that he did not have rank enough to entitle him to precedence on this occasion. And so he dilly-dallied, and Willard's question found him still open for an engagement, and pining thereat.

"I don't know," returned Wallace, in assumed carelessness. "I hadn't thought of it — particularly. I suppose all the married ladies will be there with their husbands?" he inquired, cautiously.

"Ye-es, I suppose so," said Willard, assenting to the hazard.

There was a pause, while both men fumbled for words. Willard, however, felt sure of his case, and was only waiting for Wallace to develop it for him.

"Miss Harding will go with the Major and Mrs. Remmick?" was Wallace's next suggestion, made as though all other possibilities were exhausted.

"Ye-es; that is, in a way. I believe Captain Lyndon expects to escort her in person, though."

"Ah, I didn't know that!" exclaimed Wallace, unguardedly.

"Oh, that's fixed up. The army never allows its guests to suffer, Wallace. We give them the best we've got."

"Well, that's right." Wallace concealed but a fraction of his disappointment, but Willard was determinedly unobservant of it.

"Certainly. The army has a pretty high

standard in these things, but I see you are getting the hang of it all right. Some men don't get over their civilian notions for a long time. I like to see a youngster show some sense and discretion in these matters," and he looked flatteringly upon Wallace.

"That's all right — thanks, Willard." He reddened a little, which was to his credit. "Of course, it's a gentleman's business to have, as you say, a high standard. Well — I suppose in the case of families all will go together?"

If they had, that would have settled the business, and Willard would have had no occasion to make this call.

"Why should they?" said he, in mild surprise. "You wouldn't expect Miss Harding to go with the Major and his wife, and no special escort, would you? No. We must treat all alike. The army is too democratic to allow of any appearance of favoritism."

Wallace maintained a silence that was oppressive to Willard, for he had a distinct duty for him to perform.

"I tell you, Wallace," he continued, "in the army it's different from civil life. We are all on a social level from the *n*th lieuten-

ant up, or from the ranking colonel down. It is a mere matter of promotion, and socially one man is as good as another. Same way with our women. We treat them all alike, for army women never grow old. That's where they differ from their civil sisters. We are glad to pay them equal attention at all times, and when you consider all they go through for us, it is no more than they deserve."

"That's so!" declared Wallace, with a degree of warmth that was of comfort to Willard, for the trump card had been played. "Well, let's see, then, looking at it as a matter of duty — oh, of pleasant duty — well, of pleasure, then, and leave duty out," said he, for Willard did not appear to agree with his manner of looking at it. "To begin near the top, — for rank and age go together, — there's Miss Burns, now. Wonder if anybody is going to take her?"

"Nobody is going to leave her," said Willard, more quietly, for Wallace had at last taken the trail he designated. "I don't know if any one has spoken to her about it. Haven't heard the fellows mention it."

"That's not to be wondered at," commented Wallace.

"It is a case in point," said Willard, ignoring his remark. "She is a little past the blush, to be sure, and she never was pretty, exactly. You can't expect such a personal blessing as that in this God-forsaken climate. But there isn't a better girl in the whole United States army, and what is more, she belongs to the regiment. Born in it, lived in it; if she don't marry out of it, hope she may die in it. And a fellow, especially a young fellow like you, Wallace, with your expectations of bringing out a wife yourself some day, needn't be afraid of ingratiating himself with the regimental ladies."

"There's no harm in asking her, anyway," remarked Wallace, tentatively. "As you say, she's old, and she's homely; and she can't talk a little bit. Does she dance, do you happen to know?"

Willard fenced cautiously. He did not mean to lose the game when it was so nearly secured. "No, I don't know; that is to say, I never danced with her myself. I was never stationed with her before, and we don't get a dance out here very often, anyway."

"Anybody would be excusable for getting rusty on dancing," said Wallace, half bitterly.

"I'll try it, anyway," he added. "Loyalty to the regimental ladies a good thing? Well, you'll find me there every time! I'm glad you mentioned her, too, Willard. It don't make a particle of difference whom I take, and I hadn't thought of her myself."

"Oh, that's all right. I didn't mean to make any suggestion — merely inquiring casually," said Willard, mendaciously. "But it's a good point to remember: army women never grow old. Well, must go now. Good day."

"So long."

Willard hastened home and told his wife her plan had worked admirably. Later, when they saw Wallace go up the Line to Captain Burns's quarters, they felt that they had reaped a full recompense. For Miss Burns had intimated in Mrs. Willard's hearing that she should not attend. Plainly, this was because no escort offered. Now Miss Burns would attend, matters would go smoothly, and there would be no hackling of any one's feelings. Mrs. Willard had acted so delicately in the matter that Miss Burns could never suspect her of complicity in a plot to provide escorts; and the result

was entirely along the desirable line of regimental harmony.

With the easy adaptability of army life, the chapel was made into a dancing pavilion for the night. It was the one building at the post that admitted of general use. Ordinarily it was a school-house. On exceptional Sabbaths religious services were held in it, and it took its name from this rarer quality. A squad of soldiers made short work of the benches, and the limited floor space, notoriously rough, was made ready for the dancing. No wax was required; brooms and scrubbing-brushes did its business quickly.

Requisition was made upon Thompson, the quartermaster, for a great mass of flags and bunting; and this was draped about the ragged walls according to the enlisted man's idea of the artistic. At any rate, it was so disposed as to cover the broken plastering, which was a point gained. And then one of the companies contributed a stand of arms, from which the punch-kettle was to be suspended; and Captain Eagan's cavalry troop surrendered their sabres, which were ingeniously fitted together in the form of stars, and secured against the background

of bunting. The schoolmaster's platform was reserved for the orchestra, improvised from the regimental band, and a tent pitched outside and near a window answered admirably for a refreshment room. Thus the scene was prepared for an evening of dancing and light, and it was viewed with satisfaction as representing passably well the army notion. There was some talk of drawing in the reveille gun to stand on the platform, muzzle on, to the party; thus each arm of the service would have been represented in the decorations. But it was feared the gun might have a depressing effect, as a moral engine, and so mar the perfection of the evening, and the idea was abandoned. The detail of enlisted men who did the work of garlanding were well satisfied with the result. With more resources, they would have made a better showing; but their labors had been conscientiously performed, and the effect was decidedly army; and that, after all, was what they had striven for.

The night itself was still and white as Texan summer nights are. The silences of the prairie were accentuated by the occasional distant yelping of some brute outcast. There

was a conscious rhythm flowing through, which might have been the soft breeze in the tree-tops along the creek bottom, or the pretty wimpling of the water. The moon rode down the expanse of heaven, clothed in white grandeur, and barring the earth's surface with blackest shadows; the spaces between were brilliant in her pale, strong shining. But she met with rivalry at the post chapel, all glowing with oil lamps in every window. A resonance of music filtered from it, and when the door was opened, couples were seen to go whirling gaily by. Cups clinked in the tent; sliced lemon perfumed the immediate air; soldiers on temporary refreshment duty came and went awkwardly with trays. Within and without there was a commingling of voices, a touching of hands, an interblending of conditions. The dance was on, and the army was enjoying itself in unstinted fashion.

Large assemblies were uncommon; a dance was a rarity; so the room was crowded as it never was for schooling or chapeling. Every one in the garrison entitled to be present took glad advantage of this right and came. Those discriminatingly bidden from without

were present, their black coats suspicious of packing-box wrinkles. And all around, fringing the circle of light and pressing to the windows, were laundresses from the married men's quarters, and enlisted men themselves, and many a dark face of negro or Mexican. For plainspeople do not greatly affect ceremonious social musters; and curiosity drew them irresistibly towards this approximation to remember scenes that these transplanted people were disporting themselves in.

Time ran like water in a brook with the gay party. The musicians, fortified to their unaccustomed task with deep draughts, threw themselves with vigor into the work, and executed, literally, succeeding waltz, polka, and gallop. The couples danced to this music when practicable, and when not, promenaded. Some danced but rustily at the best, and were content with a little; yet there was not a woman who had not or might not have done bravely at footing it delicately in some past day. The officers, too, betrayed an unaccustomed touch. The older ones moved with grand, military precision; the younger, with a phantom of West Point days

in their mind's eye, swung with more certain vigor. Each one claimed Millicent for a dance, and when the older ones upon inquiry found themselves anticipated by the youngsters, they were politely surprised; duly depressed; concluded it was probably better so for Miss Harding; for themselves, they had not danced since —; danced better in the spirit than the flesh, anyway; and so saying, resigned themselves, and strove to escape the vigilant wifely eye on the passage to the refreshment tent. Thus, between the young and the old, Millicent did not suffer from lack of due attention, and had a vastly good time.

The heavy instruments of the orchestra thundered and rumbled unavailingly against the screaming violins; couples waltzed and walked; mothers of families were danced once about the room by their husbands, then gave it up and sat against the wall in a state of perpetual conversation with all comers. Each smiled and nodded to each. And in the warm midst of the unchecked play, a young officer, fresh to the fight and clad in resplendent uniform, strode in. The men nearest him shouted, and made a dash for his

hand; the women screamed at him joyfully; others turned to look, then joined in; the music was being wasted, for all were giving hearty greeting.

"Lawrence! This is great luck! How did you ever do it!"

"Bagged no robbers yet? Better luck next time!"

And the Major, his purple face shining through a gathered mist of perspiration, struggled to him to do the honors.

"And Lawrence forty miles away!" he cried, with famous adaptation. "We just needed you, Lawrence. Hadn't the slightest idea you could get here, though. Well, well, I'm glad enough. Come right along up to the head of the procession."

So Lawrence laughingly fought off his comrades and went up the room to where Mrs. Remmick and Millicent stood. He was tanned warmly, as blonde men do tan, from his exposed camp on the stage line.

"That is Mr. Lawrence coming," Mrs. Remmick whispered to Millicent.

Mr. Lawrence! She had not recognized him in the change from scouting rig to full uniform. Surprised, she felt her color rising, and was

angry with herself for it. But she did not quite understand why every one was making such a fuss over him. Then he came up, and bent over her aunt's hand, and turned to her.

"This is the great transformation scene," she laughed. "I am not at all sure you are the desperado-looking man who rode all round the stage that day."

The very same, he assured her, and none other.

"And how are your familiars, the robbers?" she inquired.

"They are very tantalizing. I have not once caught sight of them in all my riding."

"How sad! You must have been quite homesick for the sight of a friendly face." And then she regretted having said that.

"I was — I was. And so I rode forty miles to get here, see the face of that friend, and claim a dance with the owner of it. Am I too late?" And he made a movement to take her card.

"You progress in your acquaintance as you ride — very rapidly," said she, in some protest. He might have thought she was complimenting his horsemanship, but for her qualification. "And I fear you are too late.

The dancing is nearly over, and Captain Lyndon has the two that are left. Is he generous?" she inquired, tentatively, with a suggestion in her eyes.

"He would be generous to a fault, if there was one. He will divide with me to the last. Captain —" He turned to where Lyndon had stood near, but he was gone. Colonel Bruff had come up to him, and, touching him on the shoulder, had said peculiarly:

"One of your men, I believe, Captain?"

The Captain had been dreaming, with his eyes on Millicent's face, and Mrs. Remmick looking at him approvingly. He awoke with a start, and followed the direction of the Colonel's glance. Nearly every one had worn away from the door, and come near Lawrence; and an enlisted man, very much the worse for the refreshment tent, had straddled in, and was weaving tipsily towards them. This was Burton. There was a sudden hush in all the room, upon which his drunken tones were loud, as he waved his arms fleeringly, and repeated: —

"'Come, fill the cup, and in the fire of spring
Your winter garment of repentance fling!'

Ole man's got good liquor on to-night!"

Lyndon bowed to the Colonel, and started towards the man. But as quick as he was, some one else was quicker. Miller advanced upon Burton, and hissed at him:

"Clear out! You drunken dog!"

"That's bad language 'tween gent—gent'-men, y' know," retorted the staggering man. "I got's good right here's you have. Take that, y' drunken dog!"

And upon that he spun around with outstretched arm, and slapped Miller in the face.

Lyndon's hand was upon Burton's collar in a moment, and he stayed the angry attempt of Miller to avenge the red mark on his cheek. "There is another way," he said. Then: "Burton, march before me to the door. March!"

Burton looked at him in vinous stupidity.

"Oh, Cap'n, is it? Cert'n'y, Cap'n, do anything you say." And he went waveringly out at the door, Lyndon at his heels.

There was a pause for a moment, when each looked questioningly at another. Millicent's face was as red as Miller's own, where the man's hand had fallen upon it. Colonel Bruff made a significant motion to the musi-

cians, and they struck into the last waltz. The guests moved once more, animated by the music and by the closing hour. Lawrence turned to Millicent, whose side he had not left.

"Come, Miss Harding," he pleaded. "Captain Lyndon will hardly be back in time to dance. Give me this one."

They took a few turns, and she stopped. "I cannot dance," said she, and he led her to a seat. "Such a sight affects me so — the brutishness of it. I am so sorry such a thing should occur. It is terrible!"

"It was unpleasant," he admitted. "But drinking is a common fault with the men. The worst of it is that it should be so exposed."

"Oh no," said she, earnestly. "The worst of it is that the ungoverned fault should be there."

Lawrence looked at her curiously. He had grown so habituated to drunkenness among the enlisted men on the slightest pretext or on no pretext at all, and to free drinking everywhere, that this untainted view struck him as a novelty. He did not know what to say, but he had to make some reply.

"I don't know but you are right," said he. And the more he thought about it, the more he became convinced that she was.

The waltz came to an end, and people prepared to go away. Still, Lyndon did not return. The Major turned almost anxiously to Millicent, and spoke in extenuation.

"Captain Lyndon is probably detained about confining his man," said he. "Always is some kink in the matter. If he doesn't get back — " His eye sought Lawrence helplessly.

"If I may escort Miss Harding, I shall be glad," said Lawrence, quickly.

Lyndon did not return, and Lawrence walked with her the short distance from the chapel to the Major's quarters.

"This was really your due," said she. "After that long ride, and not getting a dance, after all. The wind shall be tempered to you a little."

"Shall I regard you as a special Providence?" he asked. "I should like to, for I am still unsatisfied. This is one of those times when a fellow can't get enough. He can only be duly grateful for such favors as may be shown him."

"Aren't you repaid for your ride yet?" asked Millicent, as she extended her hand in parting.

"Quite," said he, bending low over it. "That is cancelled. But I want to open an account."

"That is quite impossible," said she. "The terms are cash." She laughed as she said it, remembering the proposition about the mistletoe. But Lawrence could not know that.

X

The inruption of the drunken soldier gave an unpleasant color to subsequent discussion of the dance. Even when it was not mentioned, it was felt as an unhappy occurrence and a direct commentary on the futility of the army's social system. Overlooking the fact of Burton's intoxication, which might have made his tongue unruly, it was a piece of unparalleled audacity for him to declare his right to be present. This was the sentiment of the garrison, commissioned and enlisted, for strong old custom declared against the doctrine thus advanced. Of course, he must have been drunk, or he would have said nothing so outrageous. The fact that he had been ordered out to assist in the tent gave him no right, fancied or real, to intrude upon the floor. It was against all the canons of the army and all good discipline for him to do so. This was what the officers said; and when Millicent, feeling argumentative and looking

at the moral side of it, asked "why" he had no right to be there, Mrs. Remmick shivered at the bare suggestion.

"My dear," said she, "it would never do."

As a reason that was on a parity with "because," and was equally unanswerable. So she turned to Captain Lyndon, who had smiled queerly at her first question.

"Had he not as much right there as another man, circumstances not considered?" she asked.

"I would hardly carry it that far," said he. "But let me ask you a question. Would you have been willing to dance with him?"

"As he was, certainly not."

"But if he had been sober?"

"Yes. I believe I would."

"Millicent!" exclaimed her aunt. "A common soldier!"

"That would not have made a particle of difference, dear aunt," returned Millicent, composedly.

Mrs. Remmick looked upon her in despair. "Of course that is only because you are so unaccustomed to the army," she said, in extenuation. "When a man enlists he abandons all claims he may ever have had to a gentle-

man's estate. I am surprised you do not see that."

"I see it plainly, aunt," said Millicent. "The only point is, that I don't agree with you. It does not seem to me that enlisting would change his nature. To be sure, I don't know anything about this man — Burton, is it? — whether he was a gentleman or a — a — burglar. If he was a burglar, you would still expect him to be a burglar at heart, wouldn't you?"

"He wasn't a gentleman, that's sure," said Mrs. Remmick, evasively. "Just think how drunk he was!"

"As to that," said Millicent, with rising color, "I do not think he was the only one who drank too much. There were several *gentlemen* who found the floor too uneven for dancing."

Mrs. Remmick disposed the fabric she was working on in her lap with a shake that meant severe displeasure. She thought Millicent was making herself very unpleasant before Captain Lyndon. There were things about the army that might be observed, but never spoken of. She closed her lips tightly, resolved to give Millicent no further oppor-

tunity for such utterances. And then Lyndon came to the rescue. Although she knew him to be given to "queer" fancies, she was surprised that he should fall in with the spirit of Millicent's words in any degree. He seemed to approve her sentiment, although he did not wholly commit himself.

"After all, it is very little different from your civil society," said he. "Your butler and your coachman are not on intimate terms with your guests. It may sometimes happen that a son of good family drives your cab, or that a gentleman enlists. But these cases are the exceptions, and only prove the rule. The fact of a man being in the ranks is good and acceptable evidence that he is not entitled to the honors of your table. And here, we are stringent on a double account; and the other side of it is discipline. The army exists by discipline; and where would that be if privates and colonels were on terms of good fellowship? I admire your theory, Miss Harding, and am committed to it myself up to a certain point. But with us it would work out to an absurdity And after all, I believe it was only in theory that you would dance with the man." He laughed convincingly.

"Don't be too sure — and don't press the point," said she, pleading with her eyes. She knew that he had rightly judged her devotion to the theory of social equality. It went no further than his own. And then they wandered into a desultory conversation upon painting, in which Millicent led, and Lyndon followed bravely at his best pace. And Mrs. Remmick, seeing peace firmly established, left them to their discussion.

Among the officers, Lyndon was generally held morally responsible for the Burton incident. Not that he furnished the liquor, or had any part in it, but because his method of dealing with his company was misunderstood. Lawrence was the only man to combat this sentiment. He declared vigorously that the company had improved in every way under Lyndon's management; and as they heard his words, and noted his manner, Lawrence soon ceased to be pestered with remarks derogatory to his captain; and he would have had to go afield to carry on the fight. But the feeling did not languish on that account. The officers told themselves and each other that it was outrageous misfortune to have such a thing occur before civilian guests.

The Colonel, though keeping his own counsel, was believed to be favorable to the popular sentiment, for he was a thoroughgoing martinet, and some had noticed the manner in which he called Lyndon's attention to Burton at the dance. Lyndon was condemned on all sides.

He had been struggling with a hard task for months — ever since he attained his captaincy. The former captain of the company had been incapacitated for duty, and away on sick leave a long time before being retired; and in his absence the company had been unfortunately knocked about from commander to commander. Its regular lieutenants were on detached duty, and there was no one to take a permanent interest in its welfare. At intervals of a few weeks, different lieutenants would be assigned to its command, and to do them justice, each one tried conscientiously to make something out of it. But as each one had various little peculiarities of his own, and went at the business of discipline with varying degrees of perspicacity and determination, little progress was made. The company fell into disrepute; it had the largest percentage of any in the guard-house;

its drill was the raggedest; its target record at the tail of the regiment; every graceless scamp transferred from the iron-clad companies to this, where some latitude offered; and three-quarters of the soldier-deviltry kicked up in garrison was laid with good suspicion at the door of this company. It had been suggested that the company be disbanded, and reformed by drafts from the other companies; but as the captains severally protested against losing their best men and getting bad men in exchange, this was never done. And so the company was sadly in need of a strong hand when Lyndon was promoted to it, and came to the post to assume the command.

Lyndon had a reputation with the enlisted men of being an easy, indulgent commander. During his years in the regiment he had seemed loath to punish, and inclined to rely more upon the men themselves than the other officers were. This the men took to be a sign of weakness, and an acknowledgment of inability to cope with serious situations. This was a short-sighted theory, inasmuch as Lyndon had never been permitted to exercise an independent command for any length of time.

The company found an unholy joy in anticipating his arrival. When some one remarked that he had never had any trouble with his men, the reply came that so long as he let the men do as they pleased, there could be no trouble. The men believed that the new captain would interpose no serious bar to the exercise of their will and pleasure.

It had been their will and pleasure to get very drunk on each monthly pay-day. Other companies would get drunk sometimes and sometimes not, but this company never missed a date. They could be depended upon, and the guard-house cleared of lumber for their reception. But what did they care for that? A small fine, or a few days of confinement — there was nothing unpleasant in it. So, on the first pay-day when Lyndon called the roll, they proceeded with the usual process of juicing down and getting all the drunkenness they could out of their pay; and, being adepts at the business, this was considerable. That night two men developed delirium tremens, this being a climax, and were strapped in the hospital. The others were not disturbed, and they had a royal time among themselves. They were surprised at the limitless leniency of the new captain.

So through the night, limited only by the efforts of a few reliable non-commissioned officers acting under Lyndon's orders. The next morning they were sad-eyed and weary. They were indisposed to effort, and developed a variety of alcoholic ills. They made a lagging procession to the hospital when sick-call sounded, and in feeble voices recounted to the surgeon their incapacities for work. They did not ask to be taken into the hospital for treatment, but only to be excused from duty for the day. The surgeon heard them through, and wrote in the sick-book his disposition of each case. To their dismay he wrote the one word: "Duty."

The hour for drill came, and the sun was piping hot. Captain Lyndon strode across the parade, girt with sword, for the duty. Two or three of the more shaky ones saluted him, and asked a personal favor: Would the Captain kindly excuse them from the drill? They were sick.

"Why didn't you go to the hospital?" he asked.

"We did, sir."

"Didn't the surgeon excuse you?"

"No, sir. He marked us 'duty.'"

"Then 'duty' it is, boys. I can't go against the doctor's orders."

The assembly sounded, and the company formed. Lyndon drew his sword, and commenced the hour's drill. To the unhappy men it was an era of torment. Never had a drill-master been so exacting; never had they been so disinclined to drill. Up and down the parade he marched them, the sun baking their backs and blinding their sodden eyes. They marched in line and in column, company front and by platoons; they wheeled and turned; they deployed as skirmishers, and assembled on the far flank at a run. A hundred times they mentally cursed the merciless captain; a thousand times they cursed their own folly in drinking to excess. They stumbled and staggered like blind men, heavy-headed, shaky-kneed, with parched tongues and roasting eyeballs. The other companies, after a time of drill, rested for a space in the shade; not so with them. Captain Lyndon was out for drill, and he drove them up and down the rectangle for one hour without stopping. Then in gentle tones he said their drill was far from satisfactory, and that they should turn out for another hour

of it in the afternoon. He dismissed them, and they fell on their bunks, exhausted. They were very sober. At the end of the afternoon drill, beneath a yet better sun, they were repentant. And that was the beginning of a great change in Lyndon's company.

As the company rallied from its disreputable condition, the men found that the Captain was so far from being weak and easy that he was one of the sternest disciplinarians in the post; and yet the outer appearance of the case did not indicate this. The men could do what they pleased so long as they pleased to follow regulations and obey orders; when they chose some other line, trouble ensued with startling celerity. Thunderbolts out of a clear sky were nothing to it. But it was quite a company affair. The whole garrison was seldom advised of it by public imprisonment and trial. Under such conditions the status of the company improved; the men found an interest, both individually and as an organization, in their duties, and took a new pride in the company's reputation; so that it became excellent in drill, and noted at the targets. The

men found what it was to possess the respect of the Captain — something before unthought of. The company kitchen improved, and the barrack took on an air of comfort. There was a uniform supply of white stoneware, clean, for the table; and sheets and pillow-cases were conspicuous on the bunks at Sunday morning inspection of quarters, when all the officers went through, comparing notes. These things were in advance of the experience of other companies, and Lyndon's got the name of being almost Sybaritic in the luxury of its appointments. Affairs went very well. The men had learned that Lyndon had a heavy hand. They were glad, and respected it. But it was not always in sight, and they were known to brag of their captain's "way," as differing from the ways of other captains.

That was delightful to look upon, and Lyndon deserved credit for the picture. But it was not always Sunday morning inspection in the quarters. There were off days for the whole company, when they breathed a black wind against all the world; and there were certain men in it who demanded extra consideration in handling. Burton was among

these. He was one of the most intelligent men in the company, and had been a leading spirit in soldier-wickedness. But after that first disastrous pay-day, he had recognized Lyndon's authority, and had held up his head satisfactorily. He did not appear to be anything out of the common run, nor did he make any professions of reform; they would not have sounded well in his mouth. But he had been instrumental in the company's improvement solely by force of example. Lyndon knew this, and was willing to acknowledge it as he might. He could not go to Burton and thank him; but he found he wrote a good hand, and so had him excused from drill, and appointed to an additional clerkship in the adjutant's office. Burton knew why that was done quite as well as Lyndon, and showed his worth by continuing in soldierly attention to duty. He developed an erect, military carriage, and appeared to such good advantage in line at parade that Lyndon determined to make him a corporal when the first vacancy should occur. That would be several months ahead, and so he intimated one day to Burton what he might expect. He saw at once that he had struck the right key.

It was but a short time after this when Colonel Bruff arrived, and the court martial of Burton followed. It did not affect Lyndon's faith in Burton, but it was a blow to Burton's pride, and so shook his own faith in himself. He thought it unjust, too, and that made it worse yet. But he continued outwardly, at least, in the way Lyndon liked.

Then came the dance. In the hurry and heat of preparation, it fell to Willard to select some men to help in the evening. He intended to take those whose day duty was lightest, and his thought fell upon Burton, for one. He did nothing except parade, and could well afford to turn to. So he summoned the sergeant major, and through him commanded Burton to the task.

The sergeant major thought there was no occasion for Burton to flash so angrily red when the order was given him. Others received it with no show of emotion. But as he at once turned pale again, and answered "all right" in his ordinary tone, nothing more was thought of it. He went to the tent, ladled out punch, filled glasses and uncorked bottles till his head was filled with the scent. Then he commenced drinking himself, in-

vaded the hall, made a fool of himself, and slapped an officer's face. There was the unpardonable offence.

Miller received a great deal of sympathy from the officers. They were one with him in sentiment. The proper thing would have been to knock the fellow down, drunk or sober; a man sober enough to strike was sober enough to be struck. But of course Lyndon came between, and — well, Lyndon was a good fellow; but what was to become of discipline if an immediate example could not be made when the occasion so clearly demanded it? Yes, regulations forbade anything of the kind; but cases were known and cited in which men had been strung up, or bucked and gagged, to the great benefit of the service; and nothing had ever been said about it. If Lyndon had only been a moment later — or if he hadn't had command of the company at all. Ah! That would have been better.

"It plainly came from that doctrine of his that an enlisted man is as good as anybody else. So he may be, but not as an enlisted man; not in my company," declared one captain.

"Not though he does quote Khayyám at you in his cups," said another.

"And did you hear what he said about having a right to be there? That's what comes of a company feeding on china plates and sleeping between sheets! We'll have 'em coming in courting our daughters next!"

So the popular feeling fed upon itself. Lawrence said nothing to his chief of these matters, and very surely no one criticised Lyndon to his face. But it was in the air, and he could not walk the length of the Line without feeling a cold wind blowing from each house: "We don't agree with you." It would be untrue to say he did not care. He did care a great deal. While no seeker after popularity, he liked being on good terms with all. It gives the strongest man a feeling of lonesomeness to be shut away from the world with a little parcel of his fellow-creatures, each of whom in his mind criticises him unpleasantly. The isolation is intensified; the heart-strings are strained to the point of endurance; he has no thought in common with his fellows; he has nothing to talk to them about; he is estranged from them; he must fall back upon himself; and

it is only a man of fertile resources who can dwell with himself and not weary of his society, day after day through the long years of his service. It was not so serious as that with Lyndon. But he felt sometimes as though it might come to that.

XI

The morning after the dance Lyndon went into Colonel Bruff's office to ask about the charges against Burton. In his heart he had entertained a hope that the Colonel might prefer them himself, but the Colonel had no idea of doing such a thing.

"In regard to Burton's case," said Lyndon, "of course the charges will include drunkenness and striking an officer. The witnesses —"

"There need be no lack of witnesses for the prosecution, sir," interrupted the Colonel. "You may put me down for one. As for the defence, I don't think there will be a crowd."

"No, sir; he can only introduce some testimony as to character."

"Character, indeed! Well, that won't go a great way."

"I suppose not, sir; but I shall be glad to say a word for him."

The Colonel drummed a moment on the

table before answering. The drum had been of assistance to him all through life, and he had a habit of imitating it when in thought. Then, "You will cumulate against him, Captain," said he, and ended the interview.

Any hopes that Lyndon may have entertained of saving Burton were sufficiently shattered by this. It meant that an abstract should be made from the records of all the offences Burton had been guilty of. His court martials, the sentences imposed, and even small matters of company correction would be laid before the court sitting on his case. It would be sufficiently damning to counteract anything that could be offered in the way of testimony of good character. It left Burton without a leg to stand on. The fact of cumulation would show the unenviable estimation in which he was held by the commanding officer, and would render the proceedings of the court martial all the more easy when they should come to casting about for a sentence. The charges upon which he was to be tried were sufficient to warrant his dismissal from the service; the cumulation would only serve to determine how long a term should be allotted him in the military

penitentiary. In this manner was justice dealt out lavishly in double handfuls. Previous punishment did not count; previous ill-doing did. This should be the end of Burton. Colonel Bruff was actuated by no personal motives in his direction of the case; it was of a piece with his usual course of procedure. But that was small comfort to a man who had looked forward to honor in the service, and was now about to suffer the deepest dishonor that could be cast upon him.

Captain Lyndon without delay drew up the charges and specifications against Burton in the customary circumlocutory form, and submitted them through regular military channels to the Colonel. That officer, having examined and approved them, caused an endorsement to be placed on the fold to the effect that he had investigated the case, found it to be as stated within, and recommended that a general court martial be convened for the trial of the offender. This was despatched to department headquarters with the satisfying assurance that the recommendation would be favorably acted upon; and the garrison forthwith sat down to await the orders for the general court, and while so waiting forgot the case entirely.

There are many duties to perform in a garrison that has the honor of being regimental headquarters. That the officers forgot Burton's case, or temporarily put it out of mind, did not argue that they cared nothing for it. It did not weigh heavily on even Lyndon, and he had nothing but the best good of every man in his company at heart. It was a situation in which nothing could be gained by brooding or by desperate preparation, and so he dismissed the matter as completely as he might. The other officers, almost to a man, hoped to see Burton dismissed; at least they said he ought to be. Lyndon would have saved the man, but knew he could do nothing. But he had his whole company to look after, from its kitchen to its drill, and as he was thoroughly conscientious about it, he had little time in which to speculate about a single private lying in the guardhouse. It was brought to his mind every morning when he went over the morning report; but so long as Burton was carried on this return as a prisoner of the guard, everything was quite regular.

The scheduled duties of the garrison were attended to; reveille succeeded by stable call,

fatigue and mess call, by guard-mounting in its turn, by the drill of the day and the sundown parade, through to tattoo and taps. And after the wheel had gone round a sufficient number of times, the charges against Burton were returned from department headquarters, marked "Approved," over the signature of a brigadier general. By which it was understood that the brigadier had examined them, by proxy. And in the same mail came the order detailing officers for duty as members of a general court martial to consider all cases referred to it, beginning with that of Private Burton. Department headquarters had done its turn; it was now the opportunity of the court.

Promptly the court was assembled, and Burton brought before it. The affair was oppressively methodical. There was but one lawful way for a court martial to take the heart out of a man, and that way was so well known and so often repeated that interest in the proceeding had flown. Members of that court may remember the stuffy room in which they sat; the heat that lay heavy upon the land; the somnolence that prevailed with some, the restlessness of others. There was

a squeaking behind the rotten woodwork that betrayed the day hiding-place of bats; and some junior members of the court amused themselves by thrusting their swords through cracks, thereby temporarily increasing the squeaking, and occasionally drawing forth on a sword-tip the quivering, reddened, loathsome body of a bat. Burton, standing before the court, read the apathy and indifference, and knew it for a bad omen. When the juniors were at their sword-play, he felt the blades in his heart. He knew they would sacrifice him as readily as the vermin which they found more interesting.

The court routine ran smoothly on. The oaths were administered, the charges read, the pleading taken, — guilty. The prosecution rested gladly. Had the prisoner any defence to offer? the judge advocate asked of him perfunctorily. None, he said, unless the Captain would say a word for his character. The judge advocate turned inquiringly to Lyndon, who nodded, arose, and was sworn as a witness.

"I can say that the prisoner is well known to me," he began, when the formal questions were ended. "He is a man out of my com-

pany. I am well aware that the mass of papers before this court show that at periods of his service he has borne a bad character. That was before I knew him, and I am not competent to speak on it. Since I have had command of the company, however, I can say no man has done better than he. He has been respectful and obedient. He has shown good soldierly qualities." He hesitated, and the judge advocate looked up from his note-taking to see if he had finished.

"For six months," he continued, "he had not been under the influence of liquor. I do not believe he had touched a drop in that time. He was making a strong effort to do well, and was looking forward to some preferment up to the time of this event. And I cannot hold him altogether responsible for the act that brought him before this court."

"That last is hardly relevant," said the judge advocate. "It has no bearing on the case, as testimony. And if you wish to make a plea for the prisoner, that should follow my own statement to the court for the prosecution."

"Proceed," said Lyndon. "I will follow you."

"I don't care to make any statement; the prisoner has pleaded guilty. I will content myself with a reply."

"Then I will continue," said Lyndon, quietly. "I will say that I consider the prisoner a victim of circumstances. His status as a soldier is well defined. It should be remembered that at the time of the occurrence he was not engaged upon any military duty. At that time he was employed in menial labor, — menial. He was ordered to that labor in defiance of the sections of army regulations that forbid such employment of soldiers. He was ordered there without my knowledge. Had I known of it, I should assuredly have ordered him away, and that would have been eminently proper. He was sent there without a shadow of good authority, and in defiance of law. Had he refused to go, he would have done no more than should be allowed him. Had he made complaint, an investigation should have followed, and some one should have been brought to a sudden sense of the fact that the enlisted man has rights, and that he is protected in these rights by law. He is no servant; he is no underling. He is charged with responsibility, and

equally with ourselves he has the military honor of the country to uphold."

The members of the court had by this time cast off their sleepiness and were all attention. The boy lieutenants with new swords had ceased jabbing bats, and were listening closely to this unusual exposition. They thought at first that Lyndon was intentionally scoring Willard for giving an unauthorized order to Burton, and visions of a duel came in their minds. It had not before been their privilege to hear the private soldier championed against all comers. They were apprehensive of a jolly row, and the older men were scowling.

"The private soldier," Lyndon continued, "claims but little at our hands. First, there is the consideration due from one human being towards another. This should not be his to claim, but ours to freely extend. He is one with us in occupation and in aims. We are dependent each upon the other, and all upon him, for success in our professional undertakings. We do not take him into our councils; that is not to be expected. We have but to require of him to do so and so, and the measure of his fidelity is the measure

of our success. At our best we do nothing for the private soldier. We too often look upon him as even less than a piece of mechanism to be taken care of. But he, by his diligence, his bravery, his honor, his readiness to share with us the scars and give to us the advantage, — he makes us what we are.

"No, he claims little, and that little often by a mute demand. There is but the one thing — justice. Because we are hardly to be held amenable to law and have almost complete control over him, is the last reason why we should be pitiless in our dealings with him; it is the first reason why we should put a watch upon ourselves, and mete to him the justice due. The enlisted man is not a saint; he is a fighter, generally brutish, often knavish, frequently drunk. We take him, knowing him for what he is, and we must not impose impossible restrictions upon him. There are certain regulations provided for his government, whose administration we are charged with. As he tries to live up to them, we should give him credit for the conscious effort. That is but justice in its most primitive conception. And if he fail, still there is much in his favor by having striven, and that

should temper our judgment in his behalf. For are we not all continually striving toward some ideal of our own, and as constantly failing in our endeavor? But we do not count ourselves as failures for that. We take credit to ourselves for the effort, and condone our own shortcomings. Let us then, as we have mercy on ourselves, have it also for others."

The members of the court appreciated the rarity of such words from a brother officer, one whom they respected for his courage and soldierliness. They would have slept under the same sentiments from the chaplain, but this was a novelty, and they were broad awake. The president of the court showed in his face grave doubt of the propriety of allowing Lyndon to proceed, and yet he took no measure to stop him. The expressions used were revolutionary in their character, but he counted on Lyndon's being in a helpless minority. Major Remmick was leaning forward, his face between his hands, intent on the utterance. Some looked impressed, some skeptical, but all listened. Burton sat behind Lyndon like a statue. It was something new in all his experience. He had heard the so-called "guard-house lawyers" clumsily ad-

vance similar views, but it had not occurred to him that they would be shared by an officer. The heat was intense; the sun stared in at the windows, a blinding glare; the men turned their backs upon him, and listened to Lyndon.

"There is little more to say" — he spoke in a quiet, even voice. "Here is a man who has climbed by his own efforts high up the enlisted man's scale. He was animated by the best motives. He had that very good thing, an exalted ambition. Upon the full head of his endeavors comes a buffet. He is imposed upon — thoughtlessly, unintentionally, maybe, but still imposed upon. He dares make no outcry. He mistrusts his own power of redress; he fears the power of reprisals. He does what is required of him, and meets his old enemy, drink, of whom he had been steering clear. Fate was against him, and the weak moment came when he could not clearly see the end for which he had striven. It is a sad thing, but in this he has proved his right to our just consideration. For God knows it is in our weak moments that we all lose all we have striven for and gained through months of strong endeavor. This is

to be thought of. Your justice will be meted out with a firm hand; but shall not your mercy also?"

He sat down, and the judge advocate rose to reply. The president looked at him expectantly and nodded. Major Remmick got up ponderously, tiptoed to Lyndon, and whispered in his ear. At the same time he was seen to shake his hand, as though in congratulation.

"I fear that I cannot make so eloquent an appeal as the counsel for the prisoner has done," the judge advocate commenced. "I feel that I am unprepared and quite unable to cope with him. My emotions have been touched deeply by his words, and yet I fear that if we lived by our emotions, our duty to ourselves and to the world would suffer. I have been told that professional hangmen detest their work and suffer from the liveliest sympathy for the criminals intrusted to them for execution; and yet people are hanged every day, and the hangmen grow fat and raise families.

"But I do not think the question is there. We have a simple case in our hands. There is no conflicting testimony, and it is difficult

to perceive any misunderstanding about it. In the first instance, this man is charged with being drunk in garrison. There is nothing said about his duty at the time, so the assumption may be that he was not upon duty at all. And that is a charitable construction. Had he been drunk on duty, that had been so serious a matter as to warrant being explicitly set forth in the charges and specifications. No. He is 'drunk in garrison.' It is not even known officially where he got his liquor.

"The second charge is striking an officer. That admits of but one construction — the delivery of a blow. There are the two offences charged against this man, and you can make nothing more or less of them. To both he has pleaded guilty, and that may be taken as the guide of the court in proceeding to a finding. The cumulative evidence does not affect the trial of this case. It can be of importance only after a finding has been reached, and then only in case of a finding adverse to the prisoner. I am now ready to proceed with the essentials."

"The court is closed," announced the president, and Lyndon withdrew. The sentinel at the door received the person of Burton as

though it was a bale of goods, and marched it back to the guard-house.

The result of the trial could not be publicly known until the proceedings had been written up, transmitted to the Colonel, re-transmitted to department headquarters, acted upon there, and a verdict of approval or of disapproval by the brigadier general returned. All that would take time, and meanwhile Burton sank again from sight and mind, save as he might be observed cutting wood and drawing water, always with an armed sentinel at his heels. For a day or two Lyndon's speech was quite generally remarked upon, and then that, too, was dropped from mind. There were daily affairs of more importance.

XII

Mrs. Remmick was one of the most amiable women in the garrison. Army life had been good to her in many ways, thereby catering to her amiability. Thus it had given her a husband who adored her and whom she constantly adored. He had faulty perceptions on many subjects; but when Mrs. Remmick thought on the list of men she had known in the army, and on the percentage that had dropped in unmentioned ways from the Annual Register and from all human knowledge, she could forgive him for being no better than he was. When she married the Major — then a lieutenant — she had made up her mind to take the army as it came, for better or worse, and to make the most she could of it. So she had put up with all sorts of household inconveniences and domestic makeshifts cheerfully. She had, perhaps, narrowed a trifle, and held yet more jealously to her social prerogatives;

that was but natural. That would explain why she was vexed at Millicent's remark about the dancing private and the tipsy officers; and yet it was true that such a remark would have fallen upon horrified ears in a much wider social circle than that of the army. However, her displeasure was but short-lived; and Millicent, too, had the excellent sense to withdraw the sting of her words.

Neither Mrs. Remmick nor Millicent lost sight of the fact that, however pleasant and relaxing the visit might be, there was a measure of work to be performed. Millicent meant to accomplish something in that new atmosphere and with the brilliant material at hand that should electrify her fellow-artists in New York upon her return. It was essentially an unknown field to them, and had never been touched upon by painters imbued, as Millicent was, with the dashing principles of the modern French school. The American soldier as he was had never been put in a picture. He appeared sometimes as a peculiarly jointed animal in stiff attitudes that displayed the uniform to advantage, but never as a man. Here, in the isolation of a far

army post, Millicent saw him at home. He was stripped of feathers and devoid of frills; but there was a certain fascinating quality of rough-and-readiness in his carriage, his alertness, that was the very quality of all others she wanted. This was her opportunity. She prepared to grasp it, and Mrs. Remmick encouraged her in the undertaking.

She dove deep into her trunks, got out all the traps she had brought in the way of artist's material, and made her room thick with them. By degrees they fell into a pretty disorder, at once noticeable and graceful, that caught Mrs. Remmick's fancy. She was continually taking the garrison ladies up to view the "studio," till it became a sanctum where they might gather for an undisturbed chat. Millicent would in the meantime touch up some half-finished sketch, and allow them to admire it. Several local bits done by her were thumb-tacked on the walls, and yet others she presented to members of the morning group. Thus her reputation as an artist was magnified, and her popularity increased. The photographer who conducted a canvas-walled gallery in town heard of her, and came to the post to meet in her person a con-

genial artistic soul. He had it in his mind to propose collaboration on some landscape work, but during the one call he ever made he did not see his way clear to stating it. The ladies of the garrison sang her praises unceasingly. They harbored no jealousy, and professed only admiration for her art, her ability, and her charming personality. So that Millicent's experience in army life bade fair to be happy.

In spite of the Major's vehement protests, or in consequence of them, she made several sketches of him, — she was rapid with the pencil, — and flashed them upon him in revenge of his attempts at teasing. Sometimes she descended to caricatures, but these, after the moment's laugh, were conscientiously destroyed; otherwise the garrison might have come to regard her with doubt. She made an excellent sketch of the Colonel riding meal-sack on his fat plug at battalion drill; that she put away for future use. Through the kind services of Lyndon she made a very complete collection of the details of soldier dress, and for a time her room was warlike with revolvers, long rifle-cartridges, saddle-cloths, prairie-belts, hat ornaments, and blanket-

bags, — all things that had the smack of the real, venturesome service about them. She made studies of these to familiarize herself with them, and went about her work in a systematic way that spoke well for her training. She took a keen delight in her explorations in this hitherto unknown field.

There were out-of-door sketches to be made also; for the southwestern light is a peculiar thing, and sun and shade possess qualities to vex the heart of any painter until they are mastered; then they give much joy. All over the surrounding prairie she tramped, generally with Lyndon for an escort, working now by the target butts, now in the pecan woods by the creek, or on the far side, getting the perspective value of miles of wire fence. Mesquite, cottonwood, cactus, all presented points for study, and she was indefatigable in her devotion to the work she had chosen.

On one rare day she came upon a congress of brilliant butterflies gathered on a single tree, in such numbers as to weigh down the leaves; all around other butterflies fluttered, seeking places on which to alight, as tremulous as detached leaves that a capricious

breeze will not allow to reach the ground. That was too much to paint; she could only admire, and demand of Lyndon if he had *ever* seen *anything* like it? No; he never had. Nor had she; she could sketch any day, but this was the chance of a lifetime. If Captain Lyndon was willing to put that camp-stool in the shade, they would stop there and look at it for *hours*. Captain Lyndon was very happy to arrange the camp-stool and the shawl, and the sketching-umbrella, so that Miss Harding might be most comfortable; and they sat down together before the tree like a determined enemy besieging a city.

It was a matter of smiling comment in the post that Lyndon was so constantly Millicent's escort on these short sketching-trips. He had previously been so deeply engaged in military affairs, had been such a student of campaigns even, that it was with difficulty he could be lured away from his books for a single evening. Now, nothing was of sufficient importance to keep him from escort duty. He discovered suddenly that Lawrence, now returned to the company, could attend to ordinary routine quite as well as he. So,

except when the regulations or Colonel Bruff required his presence, he was quite likely to delegate his authority to Lawrence, and to go beyond the bounds. He had not previously thought highly of the surrounding country; but he was quick to perceive new beauties in it when it was required of him to indicate them to a young lady of artistic tendencies.

Young Wallace watched the course of affairs with an almost fatherly solicitude, and wrote long accounts to the Eastern girl whose name he still refused to divulge to the ladies, but which they all knew; for Savage collected the mail, as well as delivered it. Miller looked on and grinned that it was all very pretty for those who cared for it, but for himself, he was not a marrying chap. Lawrence bit his lip at it, and said nothing. He went about the company duties, and carried out Lyndon's wishes to the letter. Only once, when some one happened to remember his ride on the day of the dance and spoke of it, he replied with a few words that silenced the man of memory. Lyndon had a clear field, and not a few of the officers were looking forward to buckets of champagne at an early date.

Millicent and Lyndon sat in the shade, and looked at butterflies. "A peaceful occupation," said Lyndon.

Millicent had been in a reverie, and started. "Yes?" said she. "Is it tiresome? Such a weary tone as you have — "

"Not at all. I could stay here — with you — till the next war breaks out."

"What unbounded patience! Or do you look for a war soon?"

"I never look for it. I have given up all hope of it, and quite abandoned myself to garrison routine."

"I have noticed that you go round and round in a small circle of duties, with no chance of getting out if it," she replied. "What do you do to break the monotony of it? For I suppose it does get monotonous sometimes?"

"Yes, after a while it does. When one has been putting in a quarter of a century engineering two sets of fours through company drill, it begins to be what might be called monotonous." There was a sarcastic quality to his tongue. "What do we do? Oh, various things. There is always great temptation to do forbidden things — things that result in courts martial and dismissals."

Somehow the thoughts of both ran back just then to Burton.

"Yes," she sighed. Then she roused herself for a statement. "I have wanted some such opportunity as this," she said, "to tell you — for it is your due — that some one appreciates what you did for that poor man."

Lyndon looked at her with hopeful eyes.

"I am glad to hear *you* say that," said he, with emphasis on the pronoun. "I spoke as I believed, not with any hope of benefiting Burton. The court martial is such a cast-iron affair; its judgment is run in such a narrow mould. It is limited in general to a strict interpretation of the letter of the law, and there is no leniency in that. I don't doubt that Burton will get the full penalty; but I am glad I spoke."

"And so am I," said she, sincerely.

"That is why I am glad," said Lyndon.

"No, don't say that, or I shall not be glad," she replied with a look that kept him where he was. She was sorry now that she had introduced the subject. "You are glad for the same reason that I am; because you did the man good, and because it is of no harm, even to the most bigoted, to hear the

truth spoken once in a while. I haven't a doubt but the court was prejudiced — the older members, I mean — without knowing it. They would judge the prisoner by the law, and not by their own sense of justice. Is it not so?"

"Yes," said Lyndon; "or, rather, by what their sense of justice would have been, had they allowed themselves independence of thought in the past years. They are bound down to the Book of Regulations, and it is a heavy weight."

They were silent a little, and suddenly Millicent laughed.

"To think of their surprise! It must have been like having a bombshell exploded among them. Tell me, did you feel like a bomb-thrower — an Anarchist?"

"I don't think I know the sensation," he replied truthfully, in his ignorance. "I believe they more than half agreed with me. But it will make no difference with the result."

He arose, wondering why he had allowed himself to be diverted from the line of compliment, and more, that he had started on. There was something he wanted to say to

her that might thus have been led up to, and it was something he could not, dared not, say abruptly. He dared not trust himself with the utterance, and yet he felt that his glow of passion was patent to all the observing world; as indeed it was. He cast about within him for some way of again leading up to the phase of conversation he longed for, yet dreaded.

"Do me a favor one moment," exclaimed Millicent, suddenly. "Stand just as you are — the *shortest* time." She made a dive for the sketch pad lying beside her, and Lyndon unwaveringly maintained his attitude.

"I wonder if I look as I feel?" he asked at length, half-laughingly.

"Oh, precisely," she declared hurriedly, as she drew in the long lines of his figure. Thus the enigma resolved itself for him.

"Then if you know how that is—" he began, with his heart in his throat, when something struck him in the face. There had been a pattering of small objects around for some time, but he had paid no attention to it. Now he looked up and saw on the bank above, and peering over, Wallace and the two mischievous little girls of Dr. Sanders.

"When you answer our rap, we'll come down," shouted Wallace, in great glee at having made a hit. The little girls laughed shrilly.

"You villain!" growled Lyndon, while Millicent laughed as though she saw something ridiculous in it. "Come down! How — how long have you been up there?"

"Long — long enough to get tired of it, you were so absorbed," answered Wallace, simulating weariness. Then with more vivacity he addressed Millicent. "Miss Harding, may I see the sketch? It must be admirable with such a model — I dare say nothing of the artist — and it is! The Captain to the life! Allow me?"

He took a pencil and quickly wrote beneath it, "Lyndon's Dilemma." Millicent laughed, but scorned to shake her head at him.

"Boy's nonsense!" she exclaimed with great indifference. Then she tore the sketch into small fragments.

"What is it?" demanded Lyndon, with a touch of jealousy. "What is it all about?"

"Just a joke, a riddle that can't be answered," said Wallace. "I am only a boy,

and I'm snubbed accordingly. Come along, little girls," he continued to his small, romping companions. "You and I will lead the way out. Want to ride with us, Lyndon? We go out on our jaunts in style, and there's an ambulance up here somewhere, waiting for us. You and Miss Harding may have the back seat."

The offer was accepted, and Millicent climbed the bank nimbly, with a small girl on either hand. Wallace and Lyndon followed with the sketching-gear. Only once did Wallace attempt levity.

"I say, Captain, you're making a pack-horse of yourself these days."

"Perhaps I don't understand you," returned Lyndon, looking at him with a certain concentration of glance that spoke warningly for him.

"I beg your pardon," said Wallace. That was all.

One evening not long after this, Mrs. Remmick gave a small card party for Millicent. Captain Eagan's two daughters were present with Miss Burns, and Lyndon, Lawrence, Miller, and Wallace came up from the mess. It was one of the small affairs, unimportant

in itself, that had served to make that season fly as no season had flown in the memory of the regiment.

But cards came to grief. The two Misses Eagan were the commonest kind of players, and Miss Burns giggled. So that presently the men began to show tricks with the cards. Some of them were very good at this. But the good tricks were soon played, and explained, and then played over again for them all to see; and then Millicent was led to entertain them with anecdotes of her artist life. There were some curious bits of Bohemia that she chose to relate, glimpses of a way of living that had much in common with the army. Not in the freedom of come-and-go, the civilian indifference and disregard where unpleasant features arose; but in the merry-go-easy air of it, making such cheer as might be, laughing away dulness, caring little for a scarcity of dimes, living with a singleness of aim. This was like, and yet, in the setting, different. It had an air of novelty to the hearers, although now and then a familiar note was sounded. It was intense, and attractive, and bright enough, as Millicent told it, to make other life seem dingy by

comparison. More than once a laugh was followed by a sigh that such delights should be in the green earth, and not come near them. They had toys of their own, but these in the playhouse of the stranger were of an unaccustomed sort. No wonder that, like small children, they should feel a rising of envious longing at the sight. Nor did they want the playhouse closed; they delighted in the new jingle, even though it were not theirs.

"Ah me!" sighed Miss Burns. "That must be delightful! And you will some day be going back to it, and we shall be —" She stopped to let painful imagination complete her sentence.

"Doing the old, demnition grind," said Miller. "But don't let's forecast. Miss Harding is not gone yet."

Lyndon seemed on the point of hoping that she would stay a long, an indefinite, time yet, when Mrs. Remmick spoke.

"I can't keep Millicent with me always. I wish I could! But we must seem very dull after such a merry round of life as hers!"

"Oh, dear aunt," cried Millicent. "How can you? I have a delightful time here."

"I am glad, dear, but we know that an artist cannot be forever in the wilds. Some day you may be leaving, and then we shall read in the papers of your pictures of American army life. Make them like, Millicent."

"And not necessarily that," suggested Miller. "We shall trust to your generosity."

Millicent deprecated any great expectations.

"At the most, it will be something new," she said. "The other girls will be coming over from Paris, and doing the conventional sort of thing, just as they have been doing ever since the beginning. I shall be glad to have this unusual line."

She gave a little gurgle of laughter.

"What is it?" said her aunt.

"I was thinking of some of the girls I used to be with," Millicent explained. "There was one girl — so intense! She worked and studied with hardly any rest. It was the world to her. She used to say when we teased her away: 'Girls, *nothing* shall divert me from my art.' And she called it 'awt.' Indeed, she never went anywhere at all."

"There might have been another reason for that," suggested Wallace.

"No; it was simply that she would not, for she had lots of invitations. She refused them all, for her *awt*. And she was a very pretty girl, too. There was no lack of young men ready to take her *anywhere*. But she would have nothing to do with them — avoided them — said they were instruments of interference between her and her work. I remember that I said to her one day as we were working together: 'Do you know what I believe? Some day some man will come along, and you will be just the girl to go off like a flash and marry him!' She said, *so* earnestly, 'That is just what I am afraid of myself.'"

"Heroic girl! To avoid the fascinating creature, man," said the Major at his wife's ear.

"And she is married now?" asked Lawrence, as though expecting an affirmative reply.

"No, indeed! She is working as hard as ever. She even went so far as to get up a club, and ever so many of the girls joined, that was to keep them from marriage. The girls were all infected with her spirit of devotion to the work. She said, 'Girls, if

we marry, it is death to our awt.' She wanted to see women do something great and noble in art, and not have the men carry off all the glory forever. So this club was formed, with a constitution and all that, and the girls signed it in *swarms*. It read beautifully: 'We do hereby promise to devote our lives to art,' and a lot more that I don't remember. She gave me a copy of it framed as I was leaving, and I have it at home." She ran on, laughing, to the end of her story.

"A regular celibate club," said Wallace, with evident disfavor.

"Yes, just that, indeed," assented Millicent.

"Is the membership increasing right along?" asked Miller.

"I don't know. The girls were very staunch, the last I knew of it. They would hardly accept the slightest attention. And as for marrying, no one would have thought of it."

"Deliver us from the evils we know not of," said Wallace, devoutly.

"Is that the expression of your sentiments, you young backslider?" demanded the Major.

"No, not mine. Some other fellow's. I picked them up, but they don't belong to me,"

he returned, standing up to his colors. And then he was patted on the back, amid much laughter, for his loyalty. And so the party broke up.

A little later the Major went forth for a taste of air before turning in for the night. Some one was walking on the parade, and the Major joined him.

"Hello, Lyndon! What are you doing out here alone, with the moon and all the stars inspecting you?" he demanded.

Lyndon gave a little nervous laugh, and determined to make a confidant of the Major.

"I was thinking," said he, "what were the chances of your niece — Miss Harding — being a member of that club?"

The Major laid a hand on his arm. "My dear fellow," said he, gently, "what does it matter?" And Lyndon grasped at the straw with some comfort.

"Hello out there! Major! Lyndon! Come up and have a new cigar with me!" It was Lawrence speaking from his porch.

So they joined him, and three small red dots soon glowed from the shade in line. But few words were spoken.

XIII

Department headquarters were remarkably active in passing upon Burton's case. Sometimes cases lingered there till long after the primal post authorities had forgotten them; but this one was attended to with such celerity that Willard whistled to himself as he broke the seals upon the package. By return of mail! It was almost that. He took the papers to Colonel Bruff, merely remarking that Burton's case was back, and that the proceedings were approved. The Colonel read the endorsement, and then opened the papers to the finding and sentence of the court. He read: —

"Plea, guilty. Finding, guilty. Sentence, to be dishonorably discharged the service of the United States, forfeiting all pay and allowances now due or that may become due him, and to be confined at hard labor, at such place as the Reviewing Authority may designate, for a period of three years." Further

examination showed that the Reviewing Authority, in accordance with form, had designated the military penitentiary at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, as the place of confinement at hard labor. Further than that, the recommendation to clemency made by a majority of the court was disregarded, and the court scored for its suggestion.

"It does not appear," were the words of the Reviewing Authority, "that there was any just ground for this recommendation. The charges and specifications were explicit, and no doubt existed of the prisoner's guilt. In fact, the prisoner attempted no defence. The court seems in this particular to have been led astray by the appeal to sentiment made by the prisoner's counsel, to which no more than a rhetorical value should attach. The members of the court are reminded that a court martial differs from the ordinary civil court in that it is not only a court of justice, but a court of honor as well. No other sentiment, however admirable in itself, is supposed to affect its considerations. The judge advocate is to be complimented on his conduct of the case. Signed," etc.

The Colonel read, and nodded approvingly.

"That is quite in accord with my judgment —admonition and all," said he. "The service has quite enough to do in dispensing justice with honor. You will notify Prisoner Burton of his sentence, Mr. Willard, and direct the officer of the day to have him ironed at once."

There was nothing else of importance in the morning papers. The Colonel signed the consolidated report, and marched up the parade to his quarters, followed at the regulation six paces by the nattily uniformed orderly of the day. And if he carried himself a trifle more stiffly and returned salutes a shade more curtly than usual, it was because his personal opinions had met with approval in high quarters, and because Justice and Honor were supporting him on either hand. Poor Mercy, quite downcast, lingered drooping in the rear of the orderly.

The Colonel felt that justice had been done Burton. He believed the man to be essentially bad, and altogether unworthy of the status of an enlisted man. The sentence passed upon him was, in the Colonel's opinion, none too severe; and as it ridded the regiment of him it was all the more excel-

lent. And the Colonel had adhered to the letter of the law in his share of the matter. He had neither written nor spoken a word to bias the action of the powerful Reviewing Authority at department headquarters; it was thus that his honor was upright. He had nothing with which to reproach himself; on the contrary, he was to be congratulated on the proper termination of another of those troublesome little crises so constantly arising in garrison discipline. For it was only by successfully coping with these that the garrison, the department, the division, — yes, the whole army, — was enabled to maintain the necessary dignity and majesty in time of peace to successfully carry out the purpose of its being in time of war. Consequently, he perceived with satisfaction that he had been instrumental in maintaining the profession of arms, to which he was devoted before all else, on the exalted plane it occupied in the eyes of the world. This was a point on which he deserved to be commended; and as he could hardly explain to a second party the course of mental athletics he was going through, he was obliged to commend himself; which he did.

Under the sharp stimulation of the moment he perceived it was the road to preferment in high official circles that he was treading — the road to promotion. And promotion was a blessed thing, to be appreciated both for its rarity and for its increase of pay. He would gladly exchange the eagle of a colonelcy for the star of a brigadier, and he felt that the step was by no means an immediate improbability. In accordance with the prevailing custom, he would surely be made a brigadier a month or two before being put on the retired list for age. That was the thoughtful attention accorded its eligible old soldiers by a closely calculating government. But in this flush of triumphant justice he thought it likely that merit would be appreciated, and that he would yet have sway over a brigadier's command for two or three active years at least.

The officer of the day was notified by the adjutant of the final approval of the proceedings in Burton's case, and at once went to the guard-house and read out the sentence. The officer of the day happened to be Miller. He performed the duty in the mechanical manner peculiar to military men; it was a

bit of routine, and not at all unusual. So dispassionately did he conduct himself that Burton forgot for a moment the drunken blow that had reddened his face. If Miller rejoiced at the sentence, he gave no sign; and if he regretted it, he was equally undemonstrative.

"By the Colonel's orders you will be placed in irons immediately," said Miller, in conclusion. That was custom. It was taken as *prima facie* evidence of a man's predisposition to evil that a court martial should sentence him to dismissal and confinement at Leavenworth. The advertisement of innate sinfulness was in the shackles. Men were not likely to accept stoically the penalty set against them; they were far more likely to break away and disappear from the military authorities, sometimes through the connivance of comrades, and herein also lay a reason for the Colonel's order. Leavenworth was not popular as a place of compulsory residence, nor was the prison occupation of shoe-making a factor for entertainment. A man sentenced to the penitentiary could be set down as a candidate for desertion at the first opportunity; and there he was, a crimi-

nal at large. In order to preserve discipline and to protect the community from such desperate characters, irons were resorted to.

A corporal of the guard came forth with two armed privates, between whom Burton was placed; and Miller marched the little procession at once to the blacksmith's shop.

The blacksmith was also an enlisted man, but he had forged the fetters for many a comrade. So when Miller said to him, "Iron this man," he at once produced a stout link chain of eighteen inches in length, with a bar at each end. The bars were heated, curved around Burton's ankles, and there secured. There was no danger of a man running away when he was limited to an eighteen-inch stride. Miller watched the blacksmith at work and inspected the chain to make sure there was no defect in it. Sometimes a link might be so made as to be easily broken and escape rendered possible. It was a part of Miller's duty to provide against such an unhappy occurrence. Having done his duty, he returned Burton to the guard-house for safe keeping, and reported to Colonel Bruff that his orders had been complied with.

As the news got about, all barracks were

a-thrill with sympathy for Burton. In quitting his old, reckless ways he had not become priggish. He was yet the same jovial, merry companion whom the men had loved, while that they wondered at his capacity for drink. They did not now concern themselves with the law; they were moved only by sympathy. He had made hard camps and marched long marches and fought cruel foes with them, and all with the rugged lack of self-consideration that endears man to man. He was unselfish, always ready to help where a soldier's help might be given. And now the barracks mourned.

From barracks the ready compassion extended to the married quarters. Calico Row talked of nothing else that afternoon. The soldiers' wives shook their heads mournfully over the fate of so fine a young man, and drank much tea for their consolation. But tea availed nothing with the younger women. They had not yet recognized the fact that between Indian campaigns and courts martial the best of the garrison was sure to go. It was theirs to utter the exclamations of pity that the elder women had outgrown. No deep personal interest was theirs. Bur-

ton was liked by all, but he was chary of his affection. He avoided all display of the kind. And if one of them was preferred by him before the rest, the others did not know it. It was a universal loss they deplored.

Just at the moment when night fell rapidly and began revealing her stars, the sergeant of the guard went about the guard-house on a tour of inspection, and at the first corner came face to face with a girl. A bar of light was flung from a window, across her, and he saw in a moment she was the drum-major's daughter, Annie. She had a shawl flung over head, and she clutched it at her throat with one hand, while the other she stretched out to the sergeant. For he was an old man in the regiment, and had known her from a baby.

She was the first to speak, and in a whisper. "Sergeant!"

"Annie! You here!" He was surprised to find her and hesitated between listening to her and sending her home.

"Sergeant," she whispered again. "I must see him. I must."

He knew whom she meant, for the garrison that day was breathing but a single name, — Burton.

"See Burton? Of all queer things! No, no, Annie; I can't do it — and this is no place for a young girl at night. You ought not to be here. Run home now, quick." He spoke to her kindly, as to a little, erring child; for many times had he dandled her on his knee when she was smaller and he was younger.

"Ah, what harm?" she pleaded, coming a little nearer. "I know the place well, I know; but you'll think none the worse of me for being here. Indeed, it is where I should be, Sergeant. Oh, bring him out here, if only for a moment. They'll be taking him away so soon!" She laid a hand on his arm gently. "You know me, Sergeant — Annie — and you won't refuse me this I'm asking?" she whispered to him.

"I love you like a daughter, Annie, and I'd refuse you nothing in conscience," he replied. "But how can I do that?"

"Just for a moment — one little minute," she murmured.

"It would be straight against orders. He is to see nobody. I could not do a worse thing this night than that."

"By the love you bear your wife, your own wife," she pleaded as low as a zephyr

might breathe. "Do not say 'no' to me. By the love —"

He suddenly put his white-gloved hand beneath her chin, and raised her face into the light.

"Are you married to him?" he demanded.

"I am promised," said she, in sudden calm.

"'Tis the same," said he, dropping his hands, "and you have the best reason in the world for wanting to see him out of here. You are a good girl, Annie, but I cannot let you see him. I have promised to keep him well, and I will."

He turned resolutely away. Annie moaned a little, and then sped after him. She could not give up so.

"Then do this at least for me," she said. "Give him this — and this. See? I give them to you for him; I can trust you." A little folded paper lay in one outstretched hand, and in the other a small three-cornered file. That way lay escape from the shackles.

"Can you?" said the Sergeant. "But I can't trust myself. God bless you, Annie, for your true love, but do not come to me to-night."

Then she became fiercely indignant, and upbraided him.

"Are you a man at all?" she cried. "Have you the heart of a man in your breast? Or is it crushed out of you? Are you a mere duty machine that cannot love? Oh–h–h —"

He took her by the two shoulders.

"If you stay here longer, you will get into trouble," said he, sternly. "Go home. To-night I am on duty; I am a soldier, and nothing else. To-morrow I march off duty, and my man's heart will beat. Go home. Can you not wait?"

Then she bowed her head, and sobbed pitifully. "Forgive me!" she whispered. "I love him so!" She fled through the darkness homeward, as she was bidden.

XIV

Each morning at guard-mounting the prisoners were paraded with the old guard, and Burton's shackles were tested by the new officer of the day, generally in person. This was at first done carefully, then perfunctorily, and then left to a non-commissioned officer, who made a report on their condition. To all appearances Burton had calmly accepted his sentence as the inevitable, and would make no effort to avoid it. Had it been otherwise, the vigilance would not have been relaxed, and Burton would not soon have been going out to the reception of the new guard with his shackles so filed as to be broken by the merest jerk. The filing was neatly done, and was concealed by rags which he had obtained permission to wear around his ankles to prevent chafing. The cursory examination to which they were subjected revealed nothing, and he was looked upon as an unusually safe and trusty prisoner, waiting patiently

for the day when he should be transferred to Leavenworth.

But this could be only a mistaken conclusion. It was equivalent to crediting him with a continuance of all the good resolutions upon which he had formed his conduct during Lyndon's captaincy, when the present was satisfying and the future held something worth striving for. He had nothing now to gain by exemplary conduct; but he might, indeed, dissemble, and so win a chance of escape. His moral fabric, founded upon a lively hope of reward, necessarily fell when that reward became less than air. He retrograded, and became at heart what he had been, with the advantage of a period of good behavior on which to base appearances. He appreciated this advantage fully, and turned it to account. The officers were deceived by him, and it was given to only a few of his fellows to know his intentions. But these few were trusty from his point of view, and were indeed spirits upon whom he could rely. They were much such men as he himself, possessing in high degree the fiery quality that makes a man especially to be desired in the field and within reach of danger, and converts him into a sad

dog of the guard-house in the safety and seclusion of the garrison. They were essentially fighting men, and always ready to accept chances. By their kind offices matters had been well arranged, looking to Burton's escape and the prevention of his capture.

It was not known when orders might be received to forward Burton to the penitentiary. The Colonel looked for the missive every day, but it did not come, and he was in the dark as to the intentions of his superiors. And yet, by that unferreted system of communication that enables the barracks to persistently forestall the headquarters in matters of news, Burton had been informed that a convoy of prisoners was at San Antonio, ready to start, and that he would probably be ordered out to join them *en route*. The order was likely to arrive any day, and its arrival would diminish his chances of escape to a minimum; for then he would be deprived of all liberty, and kept a close cell-prisoner till the hour of departure. It was time to cast aside his passiveness and to act boldly.

The opportunity came on a day when Lyndon was on duty. The men had been quiescent for a week, and garrison-prisoners

were scarce. There were not enough of them to do the police work usually expected of them; this was the good result of Colonel Bruff's administration. In the emergency, general prisoners went to labor in unaccustomed places. For three days the wood-yard had been short handed, and Burton had swung an axe there, always under the eye of a sentinel. On the fourth day the sentinel to whom he was told off, a long-limbed specimen of the renegade Yankee to whom the Southwest offers a refuge, marched him to the extreme limit of the yard for work. It was half a mile from the garrison proper, and well out of sight. Great quantities of cordwood were piled on the area in measured sections, and made a labyrinth of narrow passages through which they had to pass, and among which a man could easily elude pursuers. From the end of the yard the ground fell away in a clean and gentle slope to the creek, where the yellow stones showed beneath the shallow water. Beyond was a fringe of pecan trees; and beyond that, the swell and dell of the prairie for miles upon miles until the blue lid of heaven shut down upon it. It was a scene to make broad thoughts and

hopes of freedom bud and swell in the breast of man. It was a familiar view to Burton; and yet he looked upon it and his nearer surroundings with a little whistle of satisfaction.

"You're fond of scenery? You like it, eh?" said the Yankee sentinel, with a grin.

"Oh, it is fine, fine!" said Burton, carelessly. The man was not in his confidence, and might not be entirely reliable. He struck the axe into a log several times to convey to a distance the idea of labor. "It's a fine, grand country, old man?" he added, a trifle more enthusiastically.

The sentinel gazed critically into the blue distance.

"I can't say I like it myself — well, not so very much. I have a big liking for mountains. The bigger they are, the more I like them. A fellow don't feel so dern conspicuous, somehow. He can't see things so mighty far off." He lingered over his words as though to convey an idea that might not be spoken.

Burton fell in promptly with his remark.

"That's so," he assented. "Mountains *are* a good thing if you don't want to be

seen; but then, that's just the place they'd go to look for you."

"Might be so," drawled the sentinel. "No telling where they won't go when it comes to that. And yet, there *is* times, as you know and as I know, when a mountain 'ud come in right handy."

"As how?" asked Burton.

"Right off — well, in there, somehow," said the Yankee, pointing across the creek to the wavering blue of the prairie. "One little hill in there would help out the scenery, to my idea, and be a good thing other ways, too."

"There's other things just as good," said Burton. He did not know how far he might trust this man. He was not the one he would have chosen for the occasion. The indications were satisfactory, but it was not advisable to run any chances of error. He might not be so favorably inclined as he seemed.

Burton chopped steadily for two minutes. It was well to let the sound of the axe be heard; inquisitive officers might thus be barred from personal visits of inspection; and the conversation was becoming interesting.

The time for words would soon be past, and then would follow action. Burton dealt heavy, resounding blows.

Some cowboys, riding along the opposite bank, saw him, and shouted derisively about "soldiering" at his work. Burton stopped and listened. Two soldiers together, a sentinel and a prisoner, will do in a fair day the work of one half-grown boy. This is an accepted basis of calculation, and for that reason the phrase of the cowboys conveyed a caustic meaning. Burton scowled after them.

"Dern 'em!" said the sentinel.

"Those fellows never are 'round when we're doing soldier work," said Burton, bitterly. "When we're chasing a few Apaches, or a whole tribe is chasing we, those fellows are taking mighty good care there's no holes shot in *their* precious hides."

"Dern 'em!" repeated the sentinel, with emphasis.

Burton chopped. The sentinel lit a pipe and sat down comfortably. He offered Burton a chew off his plug, which Burton accepted. The prisoner's axe lay idle beside the sentinel's rifle.

"Did you ever see the way these Mexican troops do?" asked Burton, socially, as he adjusted the quid. "You ever see them at all?"

"None to speak of. How'd you mean?"

"I used to see them up here at Juarez, across from old Fort Bliss. They send a prisoner down to the river for a couple of buckets of water; a sentinel goes to watch the prisoner; a corporal goes to watch the sentinel; a sergeant of the guard goes to watch the corporal; and some sort of a lieutenant goes along with a gun and a knife to see that the whole procession don't desert. That's the way with them. They don't use much water, those fellows."

The sentinel laughed noiselessly. It was a good story, and he enjoyed the local application.

"I reckon it's something the same way with us," he said, tentatively.

Burton looked at him narrowly.

"What do you mean?" he said.

"Oh, nothing. I was just a-thinking that when a fellow gets sick of soldiering he ought to skip out, whether he's a Greaser or a white man. *I* would, I swear I would.

Somehow, I'd owe it to myself to do it. I ain't sick of it yet; my little old thirteen dollars a month is coming in too slick and easy. But if I didn't have that to look forward to — well, I know what I'd do."

The two men looked at each other and nodded. They commenced to understand each other.

"I'd skip before I'd go to Leavenworth," said Burton, in a low tone.

"Oh, a dern sight sooner," rejoined the sentinel.

Burton stood up straight, and looked all about.

"Might give a few chops, for gen'rul effect," suggested the sentinel. And Burton cut out a chip or two with a great noise.

"Don't work too hard. The day's young yet," said the vigilant sentinel. And Burton stopped.

"Is that a pretty good rifle of yours?" asked Burton, presently.

"Fair — yes, that is to say, it looks all right," said the sentinel. "But I never have any luck with it. I couldn't qualify at the targets. And I'm the worst sort of a skirmisher."

"That so?"

"Fact. And I certainly ain't much confidence in it to-day," he continued dryly. "I'm using reloaded ammunition, and that cartridge in there ain't got enough powder — well, not enough to carry to the crick! And my firing pin's broke, too. No, I ain't banking much on that gun to-day."

He looked up quizzically as he finished speaking, and Burton bent over him with great earnestness.

"Do you know what I'm going to do?" he whispered.

"I know what I'd do," responded the sentinel.

"I'm going to do that same," said Burton. "Presently you'll see a couple of horses come behind the pecans over there. There'll be a girl riding one — the drum-major's Annie — *my* Annie, by God! For we're promised, do you know it? That other horse is for me. — We've got our plan all made. I shall break my anklets and run. You can holler 'halt' all you want to, and fire your gun; I shan't stop, and you don't have to hit anything. — Then we ride away and ride away, Annie and I, and every man in

barracks will say Godspeed! And it's no cavalry squad that'll find us and bring us back! We know a trail — but I've said enough. — First you know, I'm off. So I'll say it now, good-by to you and all the boys."

The Yankee sentinel knocked out his pipe. He did not want to be found smoking in the excitement about to ensue.

"I'm right sorry to lose you," said he, "and so are all the boys. But I'm a good American. I believe in freedom and equality. One man's good's another, I guess. I know *I* wouldn't do no penal service — no, not for the whole United States army. Well, I reckon there's your girl now, over behind them trees. — Hello! Gone? I swear, he took me by surprise!"

One whistle had pierced through the wood; and with a twist of ankle and wrist, Burton had snapped the fetters apart, and was running as for life down the slope to the creek. He made for the shallowest part, and the horses were waiting just beyond.

The sentinel gained his feet with a great show of celerity.

"Stop!" he cried in a husky tone. "Halt!"

he shouted. And then, in a yet louder tone, as the distance was increased, "Halt, or I'll fire!"

Burton made an irreverent backward movement with his hand and kept on his course.

"I reckon I'd better fire now," said the sentinel, and bringing his rifle hip high, he pulled the trigger. There was a small flash, a loud report, and Burton flung up his hands and pitched heavily forward down the hill to the water's edge. Annie's scream rang over the water, for she had witnessed every movement.

The sentinel looked in amazement from his gun to the convulsed, writhing body of the man and back again, unable to grasp the whole occurrence. Then he dropped his gun, crying:

"My Gowd, I've hit him!"

And he would have run forward to where Burton lay with his hands in the edge of the creek. But just then a composed voice said:

"You are mistaken; I fancy that was my shot."

He looked around, terror-stricken. Lyndon, pale but very calm, was at that moment

emerging from an alley of the wood-yard, with a smoking revolver in his hand.

"We will leave him lying there," said Lyndon. "To the guard-house! Forward, march!"

XV

The shot had been heard at the guard-house, and the sergeant of the guard, acting with prompt decision, had at once ordered a corporal and a private of the guard in the direction of the sound. On the way they were met by Captain Lyndon, marching the delinquent sentinel to safe keeping. By his order the private ran to the hospital for a stretcher and men to carry it, and the corporal hurried to the place where Burton was lying. Lyndon hastened the steps of his prisoner, saw him behind a firmly bolted grating, and then went directly in search of Colonel Bruff to report to him the whole proceeding. The matter of medical attendance for Burton was beyond his province. He gave himself no uneasiness concerning it, for he knew the hospital work under Dr. Sanders was as faithfully attended to as that of any department of the post. But out of sympathy he was resolved to go to the hos-

pital so soon as his report should be received, and learn the condition of the wounded man. He might have preferred to do that first, but military observances forbade.

The Colonel's composure abated nothing as he listened to Lyndon's statement that he had been giving his company a little gallery practice with rifle and pistol, and had ended with his own revolver full of service cartridges; then he had gone by the guard-house casually, and had inquired where the prisoners were working. Learning of Burton's exposed place, he had walked down through the wood-yard, and arrived just as Burton burst his shackles and ran. He at once divined that the sentinel was conniving at the escape, and was convinced of it by his listless shouts and his unaimed shot. He had fired at the same time, left Burton lying where he fell, and had secured the sentinel as a prisoner in the guard-house. The surgeon had been notified. Burton had not been killed, though he might possibly be dead by that time. He was probably already at the hospital, and they could learn of his condition in a short time. Captain Lyndon stood silently at attention, awaiting the Colonel's pleasure.

The Colonel regretted the shooting. He called it a "regrettable incident." There was a general feeling abroad, he said, of hostility to the shooting of soldiers except by an armed foe. Personally, he thought a little occasional firearm practice by their officers would have a salutary effect upon them; but the military being subservient to the civil power, his views were not generally accepted. There was a point involved upon which the Regulations were not sufficiently explicit; while they forbade capital punishment for any offence, sentinels were enjoined to prevent the escape of prisoners by any and all means in their power. Guns and cartridges came within the limitation of the word "means"; hence, shooting under such circumstances was justifiable before the Regulations, and was morally right, anyway. Captain Lyndon had done no more than his duty, and the Colonel was pleased to say so.

This was the sole occasion upon which the Colonel was known to make adverse criticism of the Regulations.

Lyndon regretted the "incident" more deeply than the Colonel appeared to; for he had been an active participant in it, and the

Colonel was but a passive judge. Lyndon was not in the habit of shooting men — particularly men of his own command. He had borne himself exceptionally well in several Indian campaigns; but shooting white men was different work. Still, he did not allow himself to be influenced by any considerations of sentiment. He had conceived it to be his duty to shoot, and he had shot. That duty did not seem a whit the pleasanter or the more desirable on account of the Colonel's commendation. Under the same circumstances, he would do the same again, for it was the only course open to him. But it was a course that brought with it a stern, unyielding, unwelcome sense of satisfaction.

Other times, other manners.

It was a matter of surprise to himself that he should have been called upon to do this thing. Superficially considered, his habit of discipline would never have led to it. But there were times when only a hard hand would do at all, and it was an element of his nature, perhaps unappreciated by himself, that enabled him to rise to the demands of occasion. He looked upon Burton as a victim of harsh judgments, rashly delivered;

but therein lay no reason why he should shrink from inflicting the final stroke when it was required of him. His own ideas of a lenient, flexible discipline were not applicable to all cases; some men would require a different treatment. His would fail with such as completely as the generally accepted terms had failed with Burton, though the end might not be so laden with disaster.

Burton's end was the natural one for such a case; but Lyndon thought it a curiously unhappy combination of fates that compelled him to put the finishing touch to the bad work of others. If he had not taken the pistol with him, he would not have shot Burton; and if he had not gone to gallery practice in Lawrence's place, he would not have had the pistol; and if Lawrence had not asked to be excused from the drill, he certainly would not have gone near it. Lawrence had taken advantage of his being on duty, and therefore obliged to remain in garrison, to ask to be excused so that he might go riding with Miss Harding. Lyndon gave a little start when that memory recurred to him, and thought it gave an added touch of bitterness to the whole unpleasant "inci-

dent." He was nearly ready now to call it a catastrophe..

They had looked very well riding out of the post, — Lawrence on the clean, white horse that had carried him through the flood, and Millicent on an easy bay loaned by good-natured Captain Eagan from his troop in superb disregard of regulations. Eagan might have loaned her his entire troop, boot and saddle, had Millicent expressed any desire for it. He had a broad, irreflective way of doing grandly generous things that was in keeping with his good Irish name; and he was as nearly Millicent's humble slave as Mrs. Eagan thought proper. But Eagan was not alone in his homage. The entire garrison was quite at her service. The married men did what they could; the promised men went a step farther and indicated what might have been expected of them under more favorable conditions; and the men yet to be promised vied with one another in showing her such attention as she would accept. Lyndon might easily have persuaded himself that he had paid her a real attention in excusing Lawrence from drill; for thereby she had her ride and her escort, and without it she

must have done without either. At any rate, he waved his cap gaily, and looked after them with the eyes of self-sacrifice as they cantered up the Line and out through the west gate. The world was before them, broad and free, to ride upon it where they would.

They went forth, well-wished and merry, happy in the simple exhilaration of the day. A pale blue sky sheltered them, growing dark as it came evenly down to earth in folds and panels. The air was still. Larks rose from the prairie as their horses' feet padded softly and regularly on the turf. Now and then a road-runner, ablaze with brilliant plumage, cut along their path, or with an eye single to premeditated danger in their approach, scuttled into the undergrowth with a heart palpitating at the narrow escape. Plover in comfortable colonies rose fluttering above them, and when they had gone by, settled again to their chosen ground of repast. Snipe tilted along in wet places, uttering sharp little cries. The world was instinct with life and vitality; its creatures were everywhere, joyous in living. The grasses even bore themselves with a stalwart

grace, and the flowers stared unwinkingly into the face of the sun. It was a bright world, a happy world, a world for two reasoning, appreciative, language-speaking beings to live in. And these two rode through it, each listening within to a heart-song of joy and peace in this fair world that was theirs.

They reined in to a walk while they went down the steep cut that led to the creek, and they stopped half-way across the ford to watch the water wrinkle about the horses' hocks. The horses put down their heads, stretching an immeasurable length of neck, and drank. "Like a toboggan slide," said Lawrence. "Or an accordeon, drawn out," said Millicent. They looked at each other, laughing in happy appreciation of each other's similes. Down below them the stream was creeping fearingly to successive steps of a limestone ledge over which it flowed, and taking the sudden leap from one step to another with mingled sounds of anticipative dread and jubilant surprise. "'Here we go! Here we go!' That's what the water is singing," said Millicent. But Lawrence said, No; it was a secret the water was babbling about big bass and catfish in the

rapids and pools, and that none but a fisherman could understand it. "Then you shall translate it for me," said Millicent, quite as well satisfied with his version as her own.

And with that they rode up the other side to the prairie level. Then on and along the creekside, between the singing brown water and the green growth of bush and grass that swept away and up to the loving blue sky, far away. It was a world without spot or blemish on its face, doubt or fear in its heart. On and on they rode.

They went slowly by a belt of pecan trees, the shadows barring their path and flickering in their faces in constantly passing patterns. The sound of an axe came to them remotely. "Some poor prisoner is earning his pay," remarked Lawrence. Prisoner! They both smiled at the word. In very truth, each of them was a prisoner, owning the other as jailer. It was a happy occupation, this of being a prisoner. The axe bore no significance. This unseen man, this prisoner, became a flying image in their happy world. They were not in the least concerned with him, but from his state of curtailed liberty he was in harmony with them and theirs.

Prisoner, indeed! Yes, forever and a day, said their eyes. What could be better?

As they went, a girl came towards them, riding one horse and leading another. She looked at them with a guilty color, and smiled as she passed in safety. Lawrence idly recognized the fact that she was a garrison girl, but his thoughts followed her no further; she might have led a dozen horses, and he would hardly have seen them. She avoided Lawrence, and passed on the other side; and her eyes encountered Millicent's with deep, pleading meaning, insomuch that Millicent's color rose answeringly.

"That girl is going to meet her lover," said Millicent, confidently. "She will meet him, and they will ride away together on those horses — ride, and hardly think where."

"You know this?" asked Lawrence, roused to interest.

"Oh, perfectly. She looked at me as she went by. I could read."

Lawrence considered the matter closely.

"I believe you are right," said he. "She smiled after she passed you, knowingly. I hope he won't disappoint her. Yes, they will meet — perhaps she is going to ask him to elope with her!"

Millicent laughed at the absurdity of the thought. Lawrence rode nearer to her.

"That makes a difference, doesn't it?" he said.

"What?"

"Eloping."

"Decidedly. All the difference in the world."

And more they said, but with their eyes, too rare and subtle a language for words. And they rode through the Gates of Joy, not knowing that the road led thither. And presently they came to a broad, placid pool in the creek's course, with tall trees around, and green, flat-leaved plants spreading on its surface. There they dismounted, and sat beneath a tree, conversing, till suddenly both started, and looked at each other questioningly.

"I thought I heard a shot," said Lawrence, doubtfully.

"And I — I heard no shot, but a single scream," answered Millicent.

"No scream; only a shot," he maintained.

They listened fearingly for a repetition of the sounds, but heard nothing. And they breathed more easily and were reassured.

"It was nothing — we were mistaken," said they. "Oh, it could have been nothing at all." So they composed themselves again to their own affair. Their conversation became entirely personal, and Millicent referred as with pride to his fording of the river, to his ride for a dance with her, and to incidents that she had learned of his army life from other lips than his own.

"I almost believe there is nothing you cannot do," said she at the last, adoringly.

"Even to making you love me a little?" he asked, not in the least degree doubtingly.

"So it would appear," she replied with happiness, and touching a ring he had placed on her finger.

They remained there till shadows were at their shortest, and then rode slowly back. People who saw them go down the Line nodded to one another and averred, "They love each other; they are engaged," and none were found to gainsay it.

That evening, in familiar privacy, Lawrence told his captain of the existing arrangement. Lyndon went white for a moment. The day had been one long trial to him. Then he ral-

lied and congratulated Lawrence as warmly as that happy man could wish.

"And when did this occur?" asked Lyndon, later, with an attempted lightness of demeanor.

"Six days ago, between 8 and 8.30 o'clock of the evening," replied Lawrence, candidly.

Lyndon sighed lightly. "I am glad it wasn't to-day," he said unguardedly. "I should not have liked that."

"Why?" demanded Lawrence, quickly.

"Oh, nothing — nothing, I assure you," Lyndon replied in his most convincing manner. But it would not do. "Only, then, because it has been a day of ill luck. But that is only a fancy, anyway, and of not the slightest account."

XVI

The announcement of the engagement was not longer delayed, and it was received by the garrison with ready congratulations. Every one had a little private set of joy-bells tuned to the occasion, on which they rung endless chimes. Even Lyndon put a good face on the matter, and joined in. Major Remmick had a pretty clear conception of the disappointment he had suffered, but beyond a crushing, comforting grip of the hand, such as big-hearted, slow-tongued men bestow on each other in serious seasons, he gave no sign. Even to Mrs. Remmick he made no admissions when that excellent lady sought confirmation of her suspicions.

But it was not a time for thinking of disappointments. Lawrence, himself, in his exuberance of new life, overtopped all other considerations. Wallace greeted him like a brother in the happiness that is beyond understanding, — save by the initiated, — and the

two formed an unusually strong friendship on the strength of their common interest. The post sutler was suavity itself those days, smiling in his prosperity; and Lawrence poured out a month's pay in champagne for thirsty comrades who held that his happiness would last all the longer for being thoroughly "wet down" at the outset. This was a phase of the new relationship that the ladies were expected to maintain a fiction of knowing nothing about. Of course, they did know, and the men knew that they knew. But it was a matter only to be hinted at in glances of the eye, or in intelligent little laughs and gurgles. This prohibition for speech gave to it the fascination of wickedness, and had a clear financial value for the sutler. He did not appreciate it, however; he smiled vacantly, and ordered up another basket, and swore profanely that the gentlemen of this regiment were better headed men and could punish more bottles than the gentlemen of any other regiment he ever see; and he had been sutlering forty year. This was in itself quite an effective argument in favor of continuing the punishment.

The ladies, from Mrs. Colonel Bruff down

to Mrs. Second Lieutenant Bates, gathered around Millicent in a cooing circle, and repeatedly assured her of the joy they found in her own. They would be glad to welcome her as really one with them, they said. As a visitor at the post she had been able to form a good idea of army life; but to know its full delight she must pass within the doors and abide there. Her heart must be in the army, — indeed, there was no doubt that it was there already, — but she must follow it. A delightful fact that they communicated to her, and that made the life throughout romantic, was that army marriages were love marriages. This was the rule. What but love, and the most pronounced love at that, would tempt a girl to leave a home in the land where homes were — in the states, God's land — and follow a penniless lieutenant into a barren wilderness to become forever a nomad? It was farewell to a home, but welcome to a love that should take the place of home and all things else.

As the ladies told her these things in low, convincing tones, their cheeks flushed and their eyes brightened in attestation. Exposure to sun and wind in an unkind country

made an early ruin of the delicate charms of their girlhood; but there was youthful blood in their hearts, still pulsing to the measure of their young happiness. And many in gladness repeated to Millicent the lesson Wallace had learned some weeks before: "In the eyes of army men, my dear, army women never grow old." This was the shibboleth of their enduring joy and peace. The young women repeated it in blind, trusting acceptance, and the older ones in the loyal forgetfulness born of experience. And it bore a great satisfaction into the heart of Millicent.

They reasoned directly to the conclusion that should love come to one in the guise of an army officer, there was sufficient and good reason for disregarding all other interests and absorbing one's self in that alone. Millicent was very glad none of them made any reference to her art. Truth to tell, this phase had occasioned her no little uneasiness. She had feared comment, perhaps from some unmarried but marriageable girls of the regiment, as being temporarily unpleasant; but the chief trouble lay within herself. This seemed so inconsistent an ending to the career she had planned, for which she had studied. She

had never thought to be married. She had eliminated that from her plan of life. Art was to have been the object of her devotion, and excellence in her own work her sole ambition. She had even flattered herself into the belief that she was incapable of love, and then it had come upon her unaware. She was a disappointment to herself to find that, like other girls, she could so take up with a Man, to the irreparable injury of Art. It was humbling; she perceived there was nothing distinctive about her, after all. This happily drew her thoughts from art to a delightful wondering as to what He saw in her to prefer — she still being in a humble frame of mind. After all, it was as well. Art was art, and but an artificial part of life, a manufactured issue; but love was the whole of life — was life itself; and upon that conclusion she became content. After that the thumb-tacked sketches and the paint-brushes gradually disappeared from her room, the sketching-umbrella and camp-stool gathered dust in a corner, and a sardonic spider wove a web rope about her easel. It was a process of tapering off the old life and making it subordinate to the new.

One time she pleased Lawrence much and flattered his vanity, which was robust in those days, by showing him a rear-view sketch of an officer on a white horse fighting his way through a raging flood of yellow water. Beneath it she had written: "The Beginning." He recognized the Colorado-crossing incident, and carried off the sketch in triumph. He regarded it as wonderfully clever; his imagination was vivid then. He had a frame made for it by the garrison carpenter, and would sit by the hour, smoking pipes of incense before it; for it was a piece of *her* work, something *she* had done, something of him and for him.

But while happiness ruled in the courts of the Line, there was weeping and black despair on Calico Row. In the drum-major's quarters Annie lay, with fierce rebellion in her heart.

"It ain't fair, it ain't fair!" she repeated, while her mother sat helplessly by. "They've got money and clothes and everything they want; and if that ain't enough, they've got each other. An' all I had was my man, my lover, and he's dyin', dyin' in hospital! Shot comin' to me, and dyin'; and I can't see

him! They've got everything. I've got nothing. It ain't fair — and I hate 'em!"

Her mother listened with nodding sympathy, and drank tea.

"Try a cup, Annie," she urged. "It'll do you good."

Tea for the crushed heart! Annie turned away, moaning and crying in her deep misery, for which the only solace offered was tea.

"I couldn't have him livin', and I can't see him dyin'. It ain't fair!"

"It'll wear out," said her mother, soothingly. "There, dear heart, don't take on so. It'll wear away. There's many a good man shot, and many a girl crying, in the army. I've been a girl; I know. It'll all wear away in time."

"Time, time — that means living without him. I don't want time. I want him — or I want to die," moaned Annie.

Her mother shook her head and emptied the cup. She knew; she had been a girl in the army. Annie was taking it hard, but it wouldn't last so. In a garrison where girls were scarce and single men plenty, there would be no lack of rivals for Burton's place. Some one of them would be successful, and

Annie would smile again. She knew; it had been so in her own girlhood, and natures did not change, though time ran never so fast. She liked Burton, but there were other men. She knew that, although Annie seemed as yet strangely unconscious of it. Burton was dying, but Annie would recover. Her sympathy was with Annie, but her tea-dosed equanimity was undisturbed. Heart wounds heal rapidly, and all would be well in a short time.

Beyond all doubt, Burton's last days were passing. The hospital steward said so, and that was equivalent to the verdict of a jury of consulting surgeons. A man could not, dared not, get well once the hospital steward had given him up. Burton had sent a message or two to Annie, and the steward had delivered them with the bearing of an official go-between for the eternal and the temporal. The surgeon, too, said nothing hopeful. From the time when Burton had been picked up and taken on a stretcher to the hospital ward, he had sunk steadily, though slowly. With conscientious care Dr. Sanders had done what lay in his power; but Burton's was a case for the grave-digger rather than for him.

Lyndon made a point of going to the hospital on daily visits of inquiry. On one of these occasions he went into the ward where Burton lay alone, and spoke with him. This was something he had wished, yet dreaded, to do. To his surprise and gratification, Burton made it easy for him.

"It was a mean trick, Captain," said he, his weak fingers clinging in Lyndon's stronger grasp, "a mean trick to break away when you was officer of the day. For you've treated me — treated somehow different — better — from any officer I ever saw. You — seemed to forget I was a private soldier, and treated me like a man. I was mighty sorry to make you any trouble by breaking when you was on duty; but it came that way, and I couldn't help it. And I didn't want to go to Leavenworth; I didn't deserve to go. But you said all that in your speech. I've been wanting to thank you for that, and the way you used me, and to say I was sorry. I'm glad to have the chance."

"Burton, I want to say that it was my great misfortune to bring you to this bed. That shot — "

"It's all right, Captain. Don't you think

I care a rap about it. You only saved me the trouble of living a few more years, up and down, drunk and sober. I know I've got to die, and as far as I can see I'd rather put in those years there than here. I ain't very fit, but I'm as fit as I ever would be. All the chaplains this side of — of Halifax, wouldn't make any difference. It seems a little rough on Annie, just now; I'm sorry for her. But I reckon it's better so. You did your duty, Captain, and I'm glad you did it. It's all right."

"I sympathize with Annie," said the Captain, very low.

"It's all right, Captain," said Burton again.

"Yes, it's all right," said Lyndon, softly.

Burton reiterated that it was all right, and he seemed to find comfort in making the assurance, and in holding by Lyndon's hand; so that Lyndon stood by the cot much longer than he had expected to — standing there, indeed, until Burton fell into a short slumber, and he could release himself from his grasp without disturbing him. He went out on tip-toe, holding his sword with one hand lest it should rattle, and so wake Burton up.

That night, as he looked out of window, he saw lights passing in the hospital, and shadows quickly thrown on lighted spaces. It was an unusual stir, and he went over to the surgeon's little office to learn what it meant. A hospital orderly rushed out past him into the night, and ran up the Line. Lyndon heard his footfalls on the gravel to the far end. Presently he returned, and Colonel Bruff was with him. With a bare nod, the commanding officer went up the stair, followed by the orderly, and Lyndon was alone again. He wondered what strange event had called the Colonel out at that hour. Some case of emergency, evidently. As he pondered, he heard steps returning down the stair, echoing in the dead silence. He turned, and met Dr. Sanders.

"Hello, Lyndon," said the Doctor, in surprise. "I didn't know you were here. I'm glad you are, though."

He wiped his brow with a handkerchief, although it was not a warm night.

"Yes," said Lyndon. "I saw the lights and came over. I didn't know what they meant, and I — my head was full of Burton, poor fellow —"

"He won't last the night through," said the Doctor.

"No?"

"No." Then with an air of relief in the telling he added:

"He just sent for the Colonel, and the Colonel is with him now."

"I was here when he came," said Lyndon. "It is unusual?"

"Very." The Doctor seemed to want to say more, but to be unable to speak.

"I had a little talk with him to-day."

"He wanted to talk with the Colonel, too," replied the Doctor, after a short pause. "Not on official matters," he added, thinking Lyndon appeared doubtful of the interview.

"No–o," said Lyndon, thoughtfully.

The Doctor leaned towards him confidentially.

"I suppose I ought not to leave a patient so near death as he is," he said, "but it was the Colonel's orders. He motioned me towards the door after the first word the poor fellow spoke. They wanted to be alone together; doctor's of no use, anyway. I was willing to go. That first word — " The Doctor stopped again, as though unable to

continue. The perspiration stood on his face.

"What was that word, Doctor?" asked Lyndon, calmly.

"Father," gasped the Doctor.

The two men stood looking at each other across unfathomable depths. It was the infinitely loud ticking of the clock, and the sight of the pendulum silently swinging with the rapidity of thought through arcs of immeasurable length, that brought them back to full consciousness. The swift orderly ran up the Line again, and returned with Mrs. Bruff. She was trembling with expectant fear, and sobbed once as the Doctor in deep sympathy silently led her up the stair to the ward. He returned to Lyndon immediately.

"They don't want me yet," he whispered. "Not till the last moment. My God, it is horrible!"

The overhead lamp made deep shadows beneath his eyes, and his cheeks looked hollow. He was terribly shaken by the sudden discovery.

"I pity them both," said Lyndon, simply.

Then they sat silent, with the clock for

company. They had no thoughts to be clothed in words. By and by, a slight breathing at the door aroused them from an abstracted state, and they saw the orderly at the door. He nodded to the Doctor with deep intelligence.

"He's going," whispered the Doctor. "I can do nothing — only hold his pulse, and say when he ceases to breathe. I wish any one but me had to witness the despair of those two people upstairs!"

He turned then, and went straight to his duty; and Lyndon departed so that he should not be seen again that night by the father and mother of the man he had killed.

XVII

The next day the garrison went about its routine with an oppressive sense of unhappy portent. Men turning out for first duty felt calamity in the air. There was a supernatural stillness over the place; the wind was dead; the clouds hung motionless; the flag was wound about its staff in undisturbed folds. Ordinary footsteps on a porch echoed across the parade as through an empty hall. Life was a surprise to the living, and moving objects were regarded curiously. Officers consulted together in awed groups, while the women watched them from the piazzas of quarters, and the enlisted men from barrack porches. Something of significance was abroad.

Even the children at their play were affected by the air of fearful, undiscovered mystery. They went about with pale cheeks and wide eyes, looking in the faces of their elders. The two little girls of Dr. Sanders

wandered hand in hand up and down the Line, till they chanced upon Wallace. He perceived their forlorn condition, and at once sat down on a convenient railing with a child on either side.

"What is the matter?" he asked kindly.

"We don't know," they answered, almost tearfully. "Mamma's got a headache, and papa's at the hospital. And something dreadful has happened, that we don't know anything about."

"I will tell you what it is," said he after a moment. "Your papa is at the hospital because one of the soldiers has died. That is something none of us know anything about. But I do not think it is so dreadful. I wouldn't mind it if I were you."

The little girls were somewhat consoled by his words. They reflected on the limited number of deaths they had known, and on what followed.

"Will there be a funeral?" they asked, doubtingly.

"Yes, I think I can promise you that. There will be a funeral, with the band, and a procession, and a firing party, and the fat old priest in the long white duster, from town. You will see and hear it all."

The assurance of a funeral was comforting. Death was not so bad a thing, when it was followed by so moving a pageant. The little girls went away to gather playmates, and to bestow the rites of military burial upon a discarded doll in the back yard. Soon the sound of toy drums and trumpets and of mournful cries proclaimed that the mimic representation of sorrowful state was satisfactorily progressing.

Colonel Bruff did not appear at the office. His name was carried on the sick-report, and Major Remmick assumed command in his stead. Mrs. Bruff was prostrated, and was being attended by Mrs. Remmick. The surgeon had his hands full. It was a quiet, whispering, head-shaking gathering of the regiment's officers that filled the adjutant's office that morning and waited for developments. No one seemed to know definitely the whole story; no one attempted to make a consecutive statement of facts. And yet, in a general way, without looking to any one for information, it was accepted that Burton was that son of the Colonel who had been mourned as dead twenty years before, and that in his last moments the relationship had been avowed and admitted.

During the day, in the same unheralded, mysterious way, the whisper ran from group to group that the mourning put on by Mrs. Bruff so many years before had been by the Colonel's express command. The son — a mad, impetuous boy — had disgraced them, and was thenceforth dead to them. They should never see him, hear from him, speak of him. It had ever been the Colonel's way to condone no fault, to exhibit no moving of the kindly feelings. What had the boy done? No one knew. What did it matter? Appreciating through experience the Colonel's stern censoriousness, they could afford to judge the boy the more leniently. And he had been a good soldier. Yes, all could now give him credit for that. He was lying very white and still, in the dead-house at the hospital. He was unable to strike a blow or say a word for himself. None would be so uncharitable as to speak ill of him then.

It was perceived that the Colonel and his wife had indeed lost sight of their son through the intervening years. They were regarded with great sympathy; for Mrs. Bruff, overcome in the shock of discovery and the relaxation after years of close, concealing

habit; for the Colonel, in the remorse that weighed upon him. For it was said that he was taking it hard. The general expression throughout the garrison was that it was hard luck. An unusual respect, devoid of fear, was felt for the Colonel in his affliction.

It became known that Burton would receive burial, not as the Colonel's son, but as a soldier. Out upon the prairie, to the south of the post, a small square had been reclaimed from the creeping cactus growth and given over to the dead for habitation. It was fenced about with wire to guard against roving stock; and the graves were made deep; for prairie-dogs are great burrowers, and coyotes are not above digging fiendishly in newly delved soil. Wooden markers, neatly turned and painted white, indicated the heads of graves. They bore in stencil a briefly comprehensive record of service and death.

And on a day, the funeral was held. The band wailed and mourned through a dead-march. Two mules drew an artillery caisson on which lay the coffin, flag-draped, with the helmet and side arms of its occupant. The firing party followed with reversed arms, and after them the strength of the garrison. The

procession moved at a snail's pace, to the melancholy booming of the bass drum and the intermittent shrilling of the fifes. One had plenty of time in which to reflect on the solemnity of the occasion before it was over.

There had been some speculation as to the personal course the Colonel would pursue. He had made no arrangements of any kind. But as the line was formed for the funeral procession, the door of his quarters opened, and he stepped out in the full uniform of his rank. It was the first time since Burton's death that he had been seen by the garrison. He came forward alone.

As the band struck into the dirge, he took his place at the head of the officers' column, and marched steadily with them to the grave. He gave no trace of unusual sorrow in the fashions ordinarily affected. It might have been read in a certain ashyness of countenance, and in a firmer settling of lines around his mouth; but step, bearing, attitude, all proclaimed the soldier accustomed to a repression of show. The open acknowledgment of his fault was in his presence; his expiation of it was in his heart.

The coil of the procession unwound itself

from the garrison, and crept slowly over the ground to the grave. The helmet and side arms were quickly removed from the coffin, and placed on the ground. Then the coffin was lowered from sight, while the officers and men grouped themselves unconventionally around. One side of the enclosure was occupied by the soldiers' wives. The little girls of Dr. Sanders were there, having escaped the motherly eye. They hung on the wire fence, and gazed at the fat old priest, as he stood at the head of the grave and commenced intoning. They were disappointed, for he had replaced the long white duster with a rusty black cassock.

So to the end. The priest was choir, clergyman, and intermediary at the Throne. A good man, the priest, old and gray. No easy existence his. The little covered wagon in which he rode about the country, with its single mule, was at a paling. Here a wedding, there a christening, again a burial. He was in demand by all sects and by those of no sect, and he never failed to respond. Thus was his Catholicism put to the proof.

Many a soldier had he laid away. A sorry chant, a prayer of Latin, rusty as his cassock

and comforting as the sight of it. *Requiescat in pa-a-ace!* Dust to dust. A volley. Taps. Good-night to a dead soldier.

Then back to the post, to the barracks, with the band playing a lively quickstep, and the muffles removed from all the drums! How the tenors did rattle beneath the beat of the field music! It was an alert, stirring measure. Oh, it is pain that passes, and joy that remains, glossing over the dead graves with turf, enamelling the mounds with fair flowers. The living of this world are worthy of more consideration than the dead, for there are fewer of them; they rank next in importance to those who have yet to live.

The Colonel did not resume command of the post. Major Remmick sat in his place. Nor was he seen but seldom. Once, in the sudden gloom after sunset, he was observed with his wife, walking across the prairie southerly from the post. But no curious eyes followed them, and their return was unnoted.

He sent one day a note to Lyndon's quarters, and in return Lyndon went to confer with him. What was said at that interview was never known; there was a great

deal that could not be said. But after that Lyndon's company rejoiced in a return to the privileges of the old-time manner of discipline, and Lyndon bore himself with a modestly victorious air.

Shortly, the Colonel and Mrs. Bruff left the post on a month's leave of absence. This was soon extended to three months, and this to six. The officers read these notices of extension, and said it was no wonder they hated to come back. It was thought quite likely he would try to transfer to some other regiment. Recent associations were too painful.

But they were hardly prepared for the announcement that followed these, that Colonel Bruff had taken advantage of the thirty years' service law, and applied for retirement under it. He had looked forward so aspiringly and hopefully to a brigadier generalship that they had not supposed anything could alter his purpose in that regard. He would surely have waited for his promotion.

"It has taken the heart out of him," said the officers. "His ambition was to retire as a brigadier. But this has aged him. Poor old man, — heigho! . . . Well, — he didn't

need the increased pay, anyway; he had a regular income outside the service. Let's see, now, — whom does that promote? . . ."

For the retired list is the rock and anchor of the service. The old look forward to it for a few comfortable years on three-quarters pay; and the young figure up how soon the old will be shelved upon it, and they themselves get another grade. From the Military Academy to the Retired List — there is the procession of life, from the army's viewpoint. The band plays a dirge as the old veteran goes, but it is a quickstep that warms the hearts of the juniors who have seen him to the verge of his retirement. Their turns will come sometime in the years that are yet to be, — but in the meantime, please God, let the quickstep play!

XVIII

Without a spoken admission of the fact by any one, it was like the lifting and removal of a great weight from the garrison when it was definitely known that Colonel Bruff would not return to the command. Spirits were light and sanguine. The future offered nothing unusual in the strict professional line, but even routine became less depressing. The prevailing thought was optimistic. For a time, at least, the performance of duty would go on without the vigilance of a harshly considering eye, and the officers were glad; for even the sticklers among them might admit that they had had quite enough of the hypercritical quality. Major Remmick continued in command, for he was the ranking officer present; and under him there was sure to be a just and yet pleasant administration. By and by a new colonel would be sent them, but that event was too far away to cause immediate apprehension. In calm, consid-

ered method drill succeeded drill, and parade followed parade, ever with the air of being something new to itself, and of being surprised at awakening no unusual interest among the accustomed spectators.

The Inspector of the department came on his official tour, and was pleased with all he saw; and that was everything. He was not given to submitting "whitewash" reports, as rumor ran some of his associates were, and no little ratchet or pinion of the post's mechanism escaped him. His report to the brigadier general at department headquarters placed the Old Regiment at the head of the department in general efficiency; whereat there was great rejoicing among the rank and file and the commissioned of the Old Regiment. It was their ancient glory to be considered efficient, and subsequently to be allowed to prove it in the field. The men kept their rifles clean, their cartridges oiled, and one pair of marching-shoes in good condition. This had been seen; they were efficient. Now for the proof.

Unfortunately for the fire-eaters there was no more prospect of field service than at any time in the two years immediately preceding.

The Indians, to whom they looked for an occasional frolic, were provokingly sedate and taciturn. Of foreign foes there were none. The Old Regiment was hotly prepared for an emergency that could not be said to exist, and it was eating its heart out at the ill will of destiny. Lawrence and Wallace fumed in company. Not that they wanted war, for that would mean an indefinite delay of other plans each had privately laid; but it gave them a chance to say in conclusion:

"Now we've had our inspection, and everything is O. K., and there's no trouble in the wind, it would be a good time to put in for a leave."

"Good idea! We will consider the motion carried unanimously."

So the two matrimonial aspirants submitted applications for leave of absence through the regular military channels, conscious that every one at the post would approve their action. And Wallace then retired periodically to seclusion, whence he wrote letters East, informing a Girl that he was on the point of starting, and should be with her by or before a certain date; which was the date

set for their marriage. And Lawrence would be going into Major Remmick's quarters, and pleading with Millicent for a speedy fulfilment of promises.

"I'm no good this way; I'm nothing," he would say, spreading out his hands desperately. "I'm neither free nor bond, bachelor nor married man. I'm of no use in the company, and the men grin at me at drill. I can't eat, and I've forgotten how to drink. I'm losing my grip. Can't you take a little more pity on me, and complete the ruin? Don't leave me in this unfinished state!"

"You poor boy! The whole garrison is sorry for you! Well, since you are so anxious, I will tell you. . . ." And Lawrence would listen rapturously to such details of plans and preparations as she chose to impart to him.

It had been a shock to him to learn that they could not be married at the post and go thence on a wedding trip. He had dreamed of a military wedding, administered by a chaplain borrowed from another post, at which the entire regiment should be present. When he proposed this in all confidence, he was staggered by Millicent's prompt refusal to be a party to it.

"It is quite impossible," she said decidedly. "You don't understand? No? But it is so. I shall have to go East. There are lots of things to do and to get."

Lawrence did not understand in the least; but as Millicent was supported in her declaration by Mrs. Remmick, he was brought around to an abandonment of his scheme. And a little later he was led to believe that he himself proposed putting in an application for a leave, and escorting Millicent and Mrs. Remmick on their eastward journey. He remembered that there were many things he wanted to do and to get himself; and as he had not been on leave for some years, he really owed himself the attention. Besides, when Millicent's purchases were made, and she should have signified her willingness to let the ceremony proceed, he would be at hand and there would be no delay. Quite a compact little plan, and one of which he was inordinately proud, for it was approved by Millicent and countersigned by Mrs. Remmick. He only waited to learn that his leave application had been granted to put it into operation.

One night when Lyndon dropped in upon

the family, they were in full glee over the plan and its probable accomplishment; for the applications of both Wallace and Lawrence had come back, approved. Nothing now stood in the way of their going.

"And when we return — you and I," Lawrence was saying daringly to Millicent, "we will live in quarters — a mud-walled kitchen and a tent. And how will you like that, Ma'am?"

"Excellently!" she cried, not to be outdone. "I shall ask Mr. Thompson to let me have canvas on the walls, and then I'll decorate it with charcoal sketches. And how will you like that, Sir?"

"It is more than I bargained for," said he, with a droll air. "But it is an incentive."

"If we happen to be shy of quarters, Lawrence," said Lyndon, "you can count on me. Take mine and welcome."

"And mine, too," said the Major, in his humorous vein.

"I couldn't furnish a major's quarters in a year," laughed Lawrence. "A tent or a tepee is nearer my size. But thou, O worthy Captain, wilt fall a victim to thine own generosity. If need be, I shall take you at your

word. It isn't every captain who would let his first lieutenant rank him out, now is it?" he said in proud commendation to the group.

"That is Captain Lyndon's principle," said Mrs. Remmick, nodding at him reminiscently.

Millicent reached Lyndon's side before the evening was over, and spoke to him with her hand on his arm.

"Don't you do it — give up your quarters, I mean. You have sacrificed enough," said she, somewhat illogically, but with an eloquent little pressure. The Captain understood.

In a few days they mounted the stage — Millicent and Mrs. Remmick, Wallace and Lawrence — and rolled away in a dust-cloud, while handkerchiefs were flown from every door, and the officers' caps were in the air.

"Two brides to come — two sets of married quarters to fix up. My! Guess I've got my hands full," said Thompson, with his mind running on the quartermaster's slim resources.

"She's a fine girl. What a pity she throws herself away on the infantry," said Captain Eagan to his wife. "If I'd only had a stray

lieutenant with my troop, they wouldn't have had any walkover!"

Lyndon and the Major walked away arm in arm.

"It had to be so, I suppose," said the Major, awkwardly enough.

"It's all right," began Lyndon, cheerily, and then stopped; for he was repeating Burton's words. But he continued: "I'm glad for her and glad for him. And as for you and I, we're just a pair of widowers."

"Yes, just so, temporarily," assented the Major. "But out of it all you have something."

"My company? Oh, I had that anyway. I suppose I'll coddle it now more than ever."

"No, you gained something; made it."

"What, I'd like to know?" demanded Lyndon, wonderingly.

"A record. This is straight talk, now. You have converted the regiment. You have indicated a higher type of the American soldier. It is a mighty good thing for a man to have a steady ticker in his breast; but a good heart is better."

They walked on silently. The bugler came

forth by the reveille gun and blew a tripping stave.

"Mess-call," said Lyndon, disengaging his arm. "I'll have to leave you and look after my company mess."

"Keep it up," the Major called after him in pride and affection. "The men will rise up and call you blessed; and that's something, you know."

"It's everything — now," replied Lyndon.

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